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**Reading Choices and the Effects of Reading Fiction: The
Responses of Adolescent Readers in Turkey to Fiction and
E-Fiction**

By Osman Coban MEd(Hons), MEd,

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

In surveying the cultural context of modern day Turkey it must be acknowledged that, historically, there have been critical problems between different ethnic (Turkish and Kurdish) and religious groups in Turkey arising from prejudice, intolerance and leading to hatred and conflict. One way of easing the tension between these groups could be by challenging prejudice through developing empathy, understanding and respect. Among a number of ways this could be done, researchers in the field of literacy and children's literature have stressed the positive effects of reading books that emerge from the transaction between the reader and the text which have the potential to raise awareness about prejudice (Arizpe et al., 2014b; Farrar, 2017). However, research suggests that young people's amount of reading books is low in Turkey (OECD, 2009; OECD, 2012); in addition, the Board of National Education in Turkey (BNET) and education policies in Turkey have not paid attention to young people's reading interests or their reading for pleasure (BNET, 2011a and b). Based on the theoretical tenet that reading fiction can affect readers' thoughts and emotions, the wide aim of this study was to explore the potential of reading fiction for developing empathy and understanding. Given that young people's reading interests have not been considered in Turkey in detail, this thesis had to begin by investigating what kind of books were preferred and what effects they had on adolescent readers in that country. In order to accomplish this, a case study method with a mixed method design was employed and it was decided that an approach using the Transactional theory of reading as well as Cognitive Criticism would help to achieve this goal. In total, 381 students (aged between 16 and 18) responded to an online questionnaire and 10 of these students participated in interviews and reading activities. The data was analysed using the IBM SPSS 22 statistical analysis program and NVivo qualitative analysis software. The findings of the study identified the significant impact that gatekeepers and facilitators (government, publishers and social community) have on Turkish adolescents' reading attitudes and choices. It was also found that, although young people liked reading contemporary fiction and online texts, so far this has not been taken into account in the Curriculum and in the promotion of reading in Turkey. The study has identified a major gap between what schools offer and what students read (or between in-school and out-of-school practices), a key aspect in

reducing students' interest in reading books and therefore a missed opportunity for raising awareness about prejudice. Finally, this study provides strong evidence about the potential of reading and discussing books with a small group of adolescent readers, an activity that enabled them to express their thoughts about serious issues and thus supported them in developing self-understanding and understanding of others.

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Dedication

This work has been dedicated to:

You, child.

Remember someday that you loved your parents very much, but one day the police uncles came to your house and took them while you were crying. Your mum said, “We will come back, darling, do not cry.” You were expecting every day and night that they would come home. You were drawing their pictures on the wall and kissing them, and you were thinking of them when you heard the words “mum” and “dad,” but how would you know they were arrested for teaching love?

On another day, you opened your eyes in a dark, cold room where there were lots of aunties reading books, knitting and praying, crying and thinking. You were looking at the window in the upper corner of the room, but you did not know there was the sky and millions of stars in the sky for you to adore and count, and the sun and lots of play areas and friends for you to play with. But how would you know them? How would you know them until your mother became seriously ill and you went outside this place?

One day, you were leaving your home with your sister and mother. You were looking for your father but could not see him. Then you took a boat and started sailing in the sea with lots of other people. It was so cold. Why had your mother taken you on this boat? Why wasn't your father there with you? Why weren't your friends coming? Then you felt the cold again; you were wet too! Where were your sister and mother? You wanted to sleep.

On another day, you wanted to see your grandma and grandpa and great-grandma and your cousins and aunties and uncle. Actually, where was your uncle, what was his name? You had not seen him for a long time! You wanted to play with them like you did last year. How would you know your uncle was missing you very much but could not speak to you on the phone? How would you know your parents would be arrested if they took you there?

One day you were playing happily with your friend on the seaside. Suddenly, something sharp entered into your chest; you did not know where it came from or why. You closed your eyes.

On another day, you visited your father in his “workplace” with your mother and three siblings. Then the police took your mother. They said your mother was arrested. How would you know it was a prison? You cried a lot! You and your three siblings were crying with you. You just did not understand why they did this to you.

After all, we both came to this point in life because of our love of literature and the passion for trying to help others to enjoy it too.

This thesis has been dedicated to you child, just to say sorry!

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Abbreviations

TTR	Transactional Theory of Reading
CC	Cognitive Criticism
ToM	Theory of Mind
rewshare	reading-writing-sharing-reviewing
<i>Truth</i>	<i>The Other Side of Truth</i>
<i>Fault</i>	<i>The Fault in Our Stars</i>
<i>Peace</i>	<i>Peace Street</i>
<i>Prince</i>	<i>The Little Prince</i>
<i>Hunger</i>	<i>The Hunger Games</i>
<i>Heroin</i>	<i>The Dance with Heroin</i>
<i>The Curious Incident</i>	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time</i>
<i>Sinner</i>	<i>The Sinner</i>
<i>Ship</i>	<i>The White Ship</i>
<i>Brother</i>	<i>My Brother's Story</i>

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Osman Coban

Signature:

Chapter 1 Introduction

“During my primary and middle school years (1975-1985), there was political chaos. There were political events all over the country and if the parents were involved, they used to try to get their children to read political books that were written by the ideological group they agreed with. I was one of the victims of this. I was forced to read some of these books and as a result, I was scared of books in my childhood. I was given some very difficult books to read and explain, but I did not understand anything from the books that I was reading. Imagine a book about 500 pages long with political terms (...) in front of a child who is in the fifth year of primary school (...) I hated books (...) I loved reading after I became a teacher. I would read children’s books to the children. I met children’s books after I became a teacher; I didn’t read children’s books when I was a child. After that, I loved reading books.” (Teacher Eric)

1.1 Rationale for the Study

The graphic below illustrates the vocabulary related to the thesis-making process:

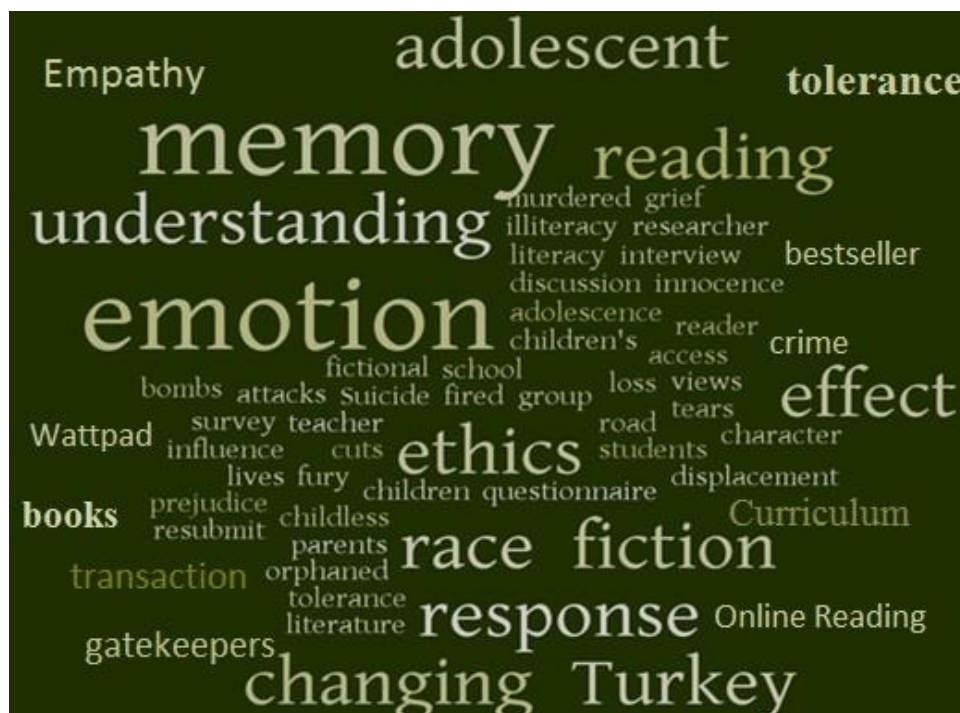


Figure 1. 1: Osman's Thesis Puzzle

I am very familiar with the educational and political issues in Turkey as I explain in some detail later and I carefully considered how reading literature could help in solving these issues. The graphic above shows some reasons for these problems (e.g., prejudice and illiteracy), the results of these issues (e.g., suicide bomb attacks and grief), the possible solutions (developing tolerance, empathy), and a possible way to apply these solutions (e.g., reading books). In order to illustrate the thesis-development process in depth, I would like to present my own background, and then I will explain the evolution of the idea for the thesis.

1.1.1 Mirroring the Researcher

I was born in Tuzla, a small village of Adana. My grandparents had emigrated from Bulgaria to Turkey at the beginning of 1950s; therefore, we have been called immigrants by local villagers. Although there were no serious issues between the villagers and our family, sometimes we were humiliated because we were considered to be immigrants. As children, we occasionally organized sports tournaments between immigrants and natives. During the school year, I lived in the city centre with my parents; however in the summer holidays, I stayed with my grandparents in the village. I would very rarely see people reading books in the village.

In my first two years of primary school, I went to a local school. I liked my teacher, my class, and I enjoyed reading. However, after the second year, I needed to change schools because my teacher had gone on maternity leave. I was unable to get used to the new school and my new teacher. As a result of this, I did not like school or reading until the end of primary and middle school. However, in secondary school, I met a very supportive Turkish language teacher, and I became first in my class in terms of academic achievement. This was when I started engaging with books again after a long hiatus.

Influenced by my teacher, I chose to study Turkish language and literature teaching at university. The University environment was welcoming for those who were interested in reading. During this period, I read many Turkish and world classics as well as some contemporary fiction books.

I taught Turkish language and literature in different areas of Turkey for six years. In 2010, I won a scholarship from the Turkish Ministry of Education and came to the UK in 2011 to study English. I completed my master's degree in children's literature; this is when I learned about the field of children's and young adult literature.

My parents did not read books to me when I was a child: I never saw them reading literature. I was never in a library with my parents, or in a bookshop except to buy compulsory books for school. With two exceptions, my teachers did not read in both primary and secondary school. My immediate environment was poor in terms of keen readers. Nevertheless, my mother and grandmother read the Quran and prayer books, and I was influenced by this. In addition, there were some good role models. My sister loved reading thanks to the influence of her teacher, and she used to bring me books. However, one day when my father saw us reading fiction, he said, "Why are you reading a book which will not benefit you?" Nonetheless, he was very supportive in terms of our academic developments. My father's reflection was actually a general attitude of working class and middle class parents in Turkey, encouraging, pushing or forcing students to 'study' (to do homework and to prepare for never ending national exams) but not to read for pleasure or relaxation.

The reason I did not have my own books was not only that my parents were uninterested in literature, but that they would not have been wealthy enough to buy books even if they had wanted to. When I visited my aunt's family, I would read the children's books in their house. I would look at the books and read them even though my visits were no longer than two to three days. Nonetheless, it is true to say that watching TV and playing with friends seemed more natural than reading a book because I saw more TV lovers than book lovers around me.

In university, my interest in books increased significantly. I would often visit the university library and read any book I liked. The crucial factors in this situation were my tutors at the university, some of my friends and the library itself, as I had not seen such a library in my whole life. At that time, I began looking

especially into new books; I was surprised that the library bought some recently published books.

Then I got used to buying books, especially second-hand ones. Visiting bookshops became one of my favourite hobbies while I was at university. I think it was in 2005 that I read most. Perhaps this was the busiest period of my life because I studied and worked at the same time. Nonetheless, I read a lot because I had discovered some very influential authors and could not keep from reading them. I also had to recommend books to my students and tell them stories. I would read/tell them a story, and then they would buy/borrow the book that I had read. Likewise, while writing my Masters dissertation in Turkey, I read a great deal as I needed to read about 20,000 pages of novels and stories written by a nineteenth century Ottoman novelist, Ahmet Mithad Efendi which was the focus of the dissertation. Although I read those fictional books for academic purposes rather than for pleasure, I enjoyed them.

When I first came to the UK in December 2011, the first thing I did after the police registration was to become a member of the public library in Bournemouth. Although I was very interested in reading in English, I could not read many books at first. The reason for this was that in addition to language difficulties, the books in English were not as ‘appealing’ as the ones in my mother tongue. I did not bring many Turkish books to the UK because I felt I needed to get used to reading in English. Eventually, I did. When I came to Glasgow, in addition to the many public libraries, I found a new place to visit often: charity shops that were selling books for amazingly low prices. (One shop in my neighbourhood sold any three books for one pound).

Looking back on this reading autobiography, I can see that the environment I lived in and the people in that environment influenced my reading development significantly. In addition, there is a tie between my personal experiences of reading, the assumptions I make in this thesis about reading in Turkey, and the choice of the thesis topic.

1.1.2 The Evolution of the Idea for the Thesis

In July 2013, I received an email from my MEd supervisor, Evelyn Arizpe, encouraging prospective PhD students to apply for the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) UK bursary to present a paper or poster at the Mexico City IBBY Congress with the theme of 'Inclusion'. Thinking about inclusion in regard to my background, I applied for the bursary with a poster entitled, "The Potential Role of Reading Fiction in Developing Tolerance between Turkish and Kurdish Students", and I was accepted. In the development of the idea, my literature, teaching and children's literature backgrounds played a critical role.

First, studying and being significantly affected by literature taught me how important reading literature is. Second, over my six years of teaching, I always recommended that my students read books and I observed how influential the books were for the students. In an attempt to be more precise let me offer an example. Especially in my first two years of teaching, I had the habit of starting class by either reading aloud or telling a short story. One day, I told a story to my seventh grade students (13-14 years old) called "Two Angels", which is about two angels who are visiting our world in the shape of two human beings and recording everything with a camera. Unintentionally, they are broadcasting this footage on TV. After watching the video on TV, even the most evil people suddenly start becoming like angels. Everyone begins respecting each other, thinking of others and so on. The angels are surprised at first, but then notice that they had recorded some views of Paradise before they landed in the world. After this story, some of my students came to me, and one seriously asked, "Is this a real story, my teacher?" Even some of their parents mentioned how excited the students were about telling the story to them when they got home.

Third, during my MEd studies in children's literature, I had the chance to read works by my course tutors, Evelyn Arizpe, Maureen Farrell and Julie McAdam. I found their studies with minority and immigrant children, which contain reading activities, useful and practical (See Arizpe, 2010; Arizpe and McAdam, 2011; Arizpe and McGonigal, 2007; Farrell et al. 2010). The books used in these studies are usually picture books and wordless picturebooks, with the exception of one study (Arizpe and McGonigal, 2007). The studies suggest that reading books can

affect children and young people in a variety of ways regarding identity, language and intellectual and emotional development. This is also where I opened my eyes to the world of reader response theory from where I got the inspiration.

Informed by the standpoint explained above, I started reviewing the literature about reading in Turkey. This review put another problem on the agenda: The fact that students in Turkey generally have a low reading rate¹ (Balcı, 2009; Kutay, 2014). I had suggested that children's and young adult literature could play a critical role in developing critical thinking skills and understanding of 'others', but how could it possible to contribute to readers' development in the absence of reading?

My awareness of low reading rates and intolerance between some Kurdish and Turkish people brought to my mind questions like, "Can I do something to increase the amount of reading in Turkey?" and "Can people's thoughts be changed by reading books?" These questions motivated me to carry out a piece of "action research", which was an attractive term that I first heard in my Advanced Research Methods course. I thought I could investigate reading awareness and thus contribute to understanding and critical thinking through reading. My initial aim was to do this by actively involving parents in the study process.

By including parents, I wanted to 'kill two birds with one stone'; if I could include parents in reading activities, both parents and students would benefit. However, at the beginning of the pilot study, which was conducted in April 2014, I realized that it was not easy to bring parents to the school for weekly activities during the daytime, as they were busy at home or work. As a result, I decided to simply interview the parents rather than carrying out reading sessions with them.

I conducted a pilot study in Turkey in one primary and one secondary school. The study enabled me to begin to understand the possible reasons for the low reading rate in the area where I collected data. I also noted that that the

¹ When I refer to 'reading' in this thesis, I mean reading books or online stories, as opposed to any other written material (i.e. text messages, newspapers) which might technically be considered 'reading'

fictional texts students read had observable effects on the students. As a result of my observation I returned to the stated objectives of my larger study and decided to review these in the light of my findings. I decided to focus on the second aspect and investigate the possible effects of reading fiction; however, to investigate this in depth, I also wanted to explore the reading choices of readers. Besides this, I needed to decide which stage of school education to focus the research on. I chose a secondary school because of my study background and of because I have more experience of teaching at the secondary level. The limited number of studies at the secondary level compared to the primary level also influenced my choice.

1.1.3 Some Words on Turkey, Theories and Research Questions

I believe the prologue given at the beginning of this chapter (Eric's memories of his childhood reading experiences) gives a brief snapshot of reading in Turkey in the twentieth century and why this study is important. The period he refers to here was when military forces took power and limited people's freedom, and they sacked and hanged many opponents and dissidents. This, of course, affected books because books and publishing were strictly controlled by the authorities of the time (Ortaş, 2014). This was not the only time period during which these kind of incidents have taken place in Turkey's history. In fact, from the beginning of the Republic of Turkey until the present day, there have been political events where reading and books, readers, and authors were threatened for reading and writing books, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Teacher Eric was "forced to read" when he was at the beginning of his reading life, and the result of this was not surprising; he "hated books." This part of the story reveals a result of the involvement of powerful gatekeepers in the reading choices of a child. Given the long history of political events in Turkey, teacher Eric was not the only person who had this heart-breaking experience. These incidents not only affected people's reading attitudes but also their thoughts and lives.

Apart from the political matters that Eric refers to, there is also the Kurdish issue in Turkey, which affects reading attitudes as well as people's attitudes towards each other. Kurdish people within Turkey have limited rights, and they

face marginalization and discrimination from some politicians and society as well. As a result of this, an ongoing problem of terror started at the beginning of the 1990s, and today there are still problems between the Kurds and the state, leading to hostility and enmity on both sides.

What is more, from an educational perspective, the focus of the state curriculum and education policies has been on gaining knowledge through reading fiction, but there has been no attention paid to the potential of literature and reading on resolving the issues discussed above. However, literary scholars mention various positive effects of reading such as providing opportunities for personal (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000), intellectual (Berns et al., 2013; Clark, 2012; Kaufman and Libby, 2012), emotional, and cognitive development (Djicic et al., 2009; Kidd and Castano, 2013; Mar et al., 2008; Oatley, 2011a and b). Considering these benefits of reading fiction in light of the social and political problems mentioned above, it is important for the young generation to read books that can help them develop empathy and theory of mind (ToM) skills through which they can learn to understand others and respect differences. Reader response scholars acknowledge the contribution of reading books and doing reading activities with a group of students in developing such skills. For example the results of an international project with wordless picturebooks, *Visual Journeys Through Wordless Narratives: An International Inquiry with Immigrant Children and The Arrival* (Arizpe et al., 2014b), revealed how children's understanding of immigration and differences developed after doing various reading activities with children.

The field of adolescent reading has not been investigated in-depth in Turkey, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. There are quantitative studies that focus on young people's reading habits, attitudes, or skills that draw a general picture, but there are no in-depth analyses of adolescents' thoughts, feelings, or responses to books. There are a few recent studies that consider adolescents' reading choices (e.g., Kutay, 2014), and the effects of reading (e.g., Avcı and Yüksel, 2011; Karakuş, 2014). A review of the literature reveals that the research, the curriculum, and the schools pay attention to efferent reading, but there is not much focus on aesthetic reading (BNET, 2011a and b). Therefore,

the area of adolescent reading needs more attention in order to identify the issues in the curriculum and education policies, discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

For all of these reasons I decided to explore the areas where reading fiction affects adolescent readers. I believe that identifying the texts that they like reading and the ways in which they are affected by the texts could potentially help policymakers consider students' interests when designing and implementing policies for a literary curriculum. In consequence I developed my research questions as follows:

- a. What kinds of texts do adolescents read, and what are the factors that affect their reading and reading choices?
- b. Given there are adolescents who do not like reading books, why do others still like reading and how do they practise this?
- c. Does reading fiction in print and/or online² really affect adolescent readers? If so, what kinds of effects do these have on readers?

In this chapter, I presented what made me ask and investigate the questions above and how I wanted to carry out this investigation. Before moving on to the Review of Literature it would seem appropriate to give an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

After presenting the background for the research, problems, and research tools in the first three chapters (respectively), I will present the results of the empirical data collected. I thought that an initial general questionnaire would prepare the reader for the reader response analysis by giving a general account of reading in the city where the study was conducted. Therefore, the reader response analysis comes after the questionnaire analysis. Afterwards, I present an analysis of e-reading habits in Turkey in the 7th chapter because, although it also includes the analysis of the survey data, it focuses more on two online

² The aspect of online reading was not among the areas I focused on in much detail when I first started this investigation. However, during the fieldwork, I noticed that the young readers were interested in online reading, in particular on Wattpad. As a result, I realized that my initial research question needed to be modified.

stories and the readers' reviews of these stories. Therefore, the data in Chapter 7 are derived mainly from online sources.

Chapter 2 critically reflects on the current reading picture in Turkey and the socio-economic, political, historical, and educational background that has shaped this picture. As mentioned above, political events affect the reading profile of the country; therefore, I made this a basis for my literature review. Then, because the concept of literature and children's literature is different in Turkey from that in the UK, I approach the matter from a conceptual perspective. In relation to this, I evaluate the educational setting in Turkey to identify the gaps, and I place my work in the context of current literature. Finally, I review two theories that I use in the current study, the transactional theory of reading and Cognitive Criticism, and I link the reasons why I want to take advantage of these theories and in what ways the research can benefit from them.

Chapter 3 explains the epistemological basis of this inquiry and the rationale for employing a case study methodology with a mixed-method research design. It also draws a picture of the study location and the challenges I faced over the period of the study. Finally, this chapter gives a brief account of the 12 books used in the study, the chapters the readers chose to read, and my reasons for offering these particular books to participants.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from 381 participants' responses to the online questionnaire, drawing a general picture of adolescent readers' reading attitudes in the city of Adana. In particular, it gives a snapshot of the reading choices of the participants, the factors that affect these choices and the effects of the books they chose to read.

Chapter 5 and **Chapter 6** emerge from interviews and reading discussions with ten students who were in their second year of secondary school. Chapter 5 focuses on the outer world of the readers with a particular focus on their thoughts about and criticisms of the book industry. The aspects discussed include publishing policies, advertisements, and the powers behind the books.

The final section of this chapter shows intertextual and intermedial references the readers made while discussing the books.

Chapter 6 presents readers' encounters with fiction and their reactions to this encounter. It portrays readers' emotional and intellectual engagement with the books and how this engagement contributes to the development of empathy and ToM skills.

Chapter 7 is an exploration of the e-reading practices of adolescent readers. In particular, it addresses the issues related to reading, writing, and sharing on an online reading platform, Wattpad through an analysis of two online stories *Kötü Çocuk*(*The Bad Boy*) by Büşra Küçük and *Yabancı*(*The Stranger*) by Öznur Yıldırım.

Chapter 8 responds to the research questions addressed in the first chapter, explaining the implications of the results for a wider practice inside and outside of school, and it states the limitations of this study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter will show the gaps and needs in the existing research on reading in Turkey and explain the rationale for the current inquiry. This will be done with reference to political, cultural and educational events that have affected reading throughout the history of Turkey. In the second part of this chapter, two theories that inspired this research, transactional theory of reading and Cognitive Criticism, will be reviewed and the rationale of why these theories were implemented in the study will be explained.

2.1 Reading in Turkey: A Historical Perspective

There are some milestones in the history of Turkey that have affected the current situation regarding reading attitudes. To draw an authentic picture of reading habits in Turkey, it is important to take a broad perspective and to include literary and cultural movements as well as language aspects.

The Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 in the territory of the Ottoman State (Sezgin, 1997). Therefore, Turkey's cultural and literary movements should be evaluated alongside the nineteenth and twentieth century revolutions in the Ottoman State. The Ottoman State began to lose its power in the eighteenth century as Western countries became more powerful with the advancement of science and technology. For this reason, the Ottoman State implemented significant social and cultural reforms, especially in the nineteenth century. Many intellectuals were sent to Europe for education, then went on to become the founders of the first journals, newspapers, and Western-style literary movements (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2016). These journalists published the first private newspapers (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2016) and the first Western-style literary works were serialized in these newspapers. However, freedom of expression was limited in the Ottoman State and some authors were exiled because of their work (see for example: Kale, 2014).

With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk accelerated the westernization process and many reforms were established, including the production of a new education system and curriculum (Sezgin,

1997). Atatürk wanted to follow Western countries in every aspect; for this reason, the alphabet was Romanized, and language reform started in 1928 (Perry, 1985; Dogançay-Aktuna, 2004). The impact of this reform is reflected in contemporaneous Turkish books, which are written in the newly Romanized alphabet. The new reforms, on the other hand, aimed to generate a more Western country in many aspects such as law, education and clothing. Because of the suddenness of the reforms, people had difficulty applying these changes to their lives. Regarding education, for example, the old style institutions were closed down, a new Western style education system was adopted in 1924 (Arı, 2002), and the Latin alphabet was accepted in 1928. Initially, teachers and students did not have training in the new alphabet, language, education system or curriculum, but teachers were provided with short-term training about the alphabet in 1929 (Tongul, 2004). According to Kodamanoğlu (1964), the education in the Latin alphabet increased the literacy rate in Turkey between 1928 and 1935, and more than 2 million people became literate.

Despite such calls for Turkey to embrace some Western attributes, the new Republic of Turkey became more Turkish-centred than the multi-ethnic and multicultural body that the Ottoman State had been. In 1924, for example, Turkey's Constitution was introduced, and it stressed that although the presence of other races was known, only the Turkish nation was accepted. This was followed by some other discrimination acts. For instance, 'Our Vow' began to be read in schools every Monday, the first word of which means 'I am Turkish' (Yeğen, 2009).

On the other hand, some political incidents affected the population's education and reading habits. Three military coups took place between 1960 and 1980, interrupting democracy and freedom (Dağı, 1996). Also, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) was established in 1978 (Yeğen, 2009) and has been responsible for bloody terror incidents in Turkey from 1978 to the present day, especially in the Eastern part of Turkey, and the terror has prevented many children, especially Kurdish children, from getting an education (see for example: Sevim, 2001). When I was doing the fieldwork, there was no effect of the terror on schooling in Adana city. Education was monolingual until 2012, when some other minority languages became allowed as elective courses. In 2014 a new law was passed

allowing private schools to conduct classes entirely in another language such as Kurdish (Çelik et al., 2017).

Another factor to affect attitudes to reading in Turkey has been the fluctuations in the education system and curriculum. Between 1997 and 2017, Turkey has implemented three education systems. In 1997 education became compulsory for eight years, whereas it had previously only been compulsory for five (Erçelebi, 2000). In 2012 compulsory education was increased to 12 years with a new system called 4+4+4. This means that students study for 4 years in primary school, 4 years in middle school and 4 years in secondary school (Güven, 2012). The examination systems at both the primary and secondary levels were changed several times over this period (Karslı and Üstüner, 2001); however, these changes did not end the criticism that the system encouraged memorisation rather than developing critical thinking skills (Yılmaz and Altınkurt, 2011).

The historical overview presented above shows that education and freedom of thought and expression have been affected by political events and reforms in Turkey, and this is reflected in the importance placed on reading and literature education. The next section will analyse the terminological meaning of literature to provide a better understanding of how literature for young people is perceived in Turkey.

2.1.1 A Conceptual Perspective: What is Literature, Youth Literature?

To understand the context in Turkey, it is important to establish a conceptual understanding of certain key terms, such as ‘literature’, ‘young adult literature’ and ‘children’s literature’. In Turkish, the word ‘edebiyat’ is used for ‘literature’. ‘Edebiyat’ is adopted from the Arabic word ‘أَدَبِيَّة’ (edebiyat). The origin of this word is ‘أَدَب’ (edeb) from Arabic and ‘edep’ from Turkish, meaning ‘decency, politeness and proper behaviour’ (etimolojiturkce, n.p.). The term ‘edebî’ is used in reference to the term ‘literary’. The ‘î’ at the end of the word indicates ownership, so ‘edebî’ is something that has ‘edep’, decency and morality. In the first Turkish literary texts, there was a strong emphasis on the moral dimension of literature; literary texts that presented or encouraged

immorality were widely criticized. Nevertheless, the definitions of literature have also involved the aesthetic aspect (Diledebiyat, nd.).

Before the nineteenth century, when Westernization started in the Ottoman state, different terms were used to refer to literary texts, but the forms of those texts were also different from the ones we recognize today. After the influence of Western literature took root, the term ‘edebiyat’ came to be used to refer to ‘literature’.

The origin of ‘literature’, on the other hand, is from the Latin ‘literatura’, meaning ‘writing formed with letters’ (etymonline, nd.). In English, however, the term is defined as ‘written artistic works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value’ (Cambridge Dictionary online) or ‘written material such as poetry, novels, essays, etc, esp. works of imagination characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of general or enduring interest’ (Collins online). It seems that while the Turkish term stresses morality, the definitions of the English word focus more on the aesthetic and artistic dimensions. This does not mean that literary texts written in English do not have moral dimensions or that the Turkish ones do not have an aesthetic side, but it is something to consider when analysing literature in both contexts. As will be investigated in the following section, the Turkish education system and curriculum pays particular attention to the educational and moral dimension of literature, but not to the aesthetic aspect. Although this was not the aim of this study, the relationship between morality and aesthetics was one of the topics that emerged during the conversations around literary texts with the young people, and it will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

There has been much debate in the English-speaking world about the terms ‘children’s literature’ and ‘young adult literature’ (see, for example, Rose, 1984; Nodelman, 1985; Nikolajeva, 1998; Jones, 2006; Beckett, 2011). In her article, ‘Getting Rid of Children’s Literature’ (2006), Katharine Jones even suggests that new terminology should be generated. Instead of children’s literature, there could be ‘*child literature*’, ‘a term which would clarify that this is literature written almost entirely by adults that assumes various conceptions of the child, childhood, and the childlike, with child readers usually being the target of the

book', or '*generational literature*' in order to 'reflect that this is a literature written, purchased, and reviewed by a generation of adults who were previously children, which appeals to a generation of children who will later become adults' (p. 305). The term 'child literature' has always been used in Turkey instead of 'children's literature' (see for example Çıkla, 2005). However, the recent developments suggest that in the creation of the literature for children, children have started to have more active role. Recently, children and youngsters have begun to have more opportunities to become author, editor and publisher of their own books with the help of online tools. An example of this could be the Wattpad an online writing site that will be investigated in Chapter 7. Also, literature for older children, which is usually called 'young adult literature' in English, is usually called 'youth literature' (see Cengiz, 2006).

Anglophone critics seem to agree that books that cross from child to adult and/or adult to child audiences can be categorised as 'crossover literature' (Beckett, 2011, p. 58). Some of the texts used in the reading activities in this research project can be included in this category. To reflect the fact that the students who participated in this research project had the chance to read any kind of fiction books, including 'adult books', I have used the term 'youth fiction' to refer to 'crossover' and 'young adult' fiction books, and 'adult fiction' for the fiction books that were written for adults but were selected by the students to read during the reading sessions.

2.1.2 Literary Education in Turkey

2.1.2.1 Curriculum and Education Policy

In the Turkish secondary education literature curriculum (BNET), the main purpose of teaching literature is 'to gain the skill to perceive the artistic value of these [literary] texts, to understand the textual meanings of the language and to make meaning of the text' (BNET, 2011a). As this suggests, the focus is only on the 'skill' required to understand the meaning and value of the text, with no mention made of aiming to develop life-long reading attitudes such as a reading 'habit' or 'love of reading'. Therefore, the curriculum's main purpose fails to capture the continuity of reading, but pays particular attention to one important aspect of reading, comprehension. The idea of 'reading for pleasure' is

mentioned in both the ‘Turkish Literature’ and ‘Language and Expression’ curricula but it is overshadowed by a dominant focus on understanding and skills (BNET, 2011a, p. 3; BNET, 2011b). Furthermore, ‘critical thinking skills’ are not mentioned at all in the curricula; this is a skill that helps readers evaluate, question and reason, then make rational judgements after this process (Moore and Parker, 2012).

In addition, the content of both curricula is focused mainly on school practices and ignores out of school practices which can include online reading practices and life-long reading skills (BNET, 2011a and b). The lack of encouragement to develop lifelong reading habits may affect teachers’ course planning and aims given that they have to follow the curriculum and inspectors check whether teachers are following the curriculum or not (Buluç, 1997; Sağlamer, 1985).

In addition to the absence of the encouragement of life-long reading and critical literacy among the objectives of the curriculum, the students’ assessments do not support these important skills sufficiently. For example, 123 learning outcomes of 9th grade literature students have been described in the curriculum, focusing on the four main subjects of art and literature, literary text, poetry and informative texts. The outcomes stress ‘identifying’, ‘understanding’ and ‘differentiating’ the texts. None of the outcomes are related to gaining a love of reading or developing a continual reading habit (BNET, 2011b, pp. 16-39).

Assessments are made through three processes: written exams (four exams each year), verbal exams which also include performance evaluations, and an end of year project report (which only applies to students who choose to focus on literature for their end of year project). The only form of assessment that could encourage out-of-school reading is the project reports. However, the topic of the project is usually chosen by the teacher and does not have to be related to reading fiction. The minimal amount or absence of student involvement in the selection of the topic is important as this could lead to the development of a forced reading practice that may contribute to a ‘hatred of reading’, as suggested in the prologue in Chapter 1 by the comments of head teacher Eric, rather than encouraging a love of reading.

The university entry exams at the end of the final year of secondary school reveal the lack of encouragement of reading more explicitly. This is because the exam consists of multiple choice questions and encourages the students to memorise summaries of famous fictional texts, but not to actually read the texts. Therefore, the students read books summarising texts in their final year to prepare for the examination, rather than reading books for pleasure. How this study process in high school could lead to ‘developing reading pleasure and reading habit’, which is one of the objectives of the Turkish National Curriculum (BNET, 2011a and b), remains as a neglected question. As well as students’ interests, out of school practices have been neglected in the school curriculum, as has happened before in other countries such as Mexico and England (Arizpe, 1994).

To conclude, although there is an emphasis, albeit very small, on reading habits and pleasurable reading in the curriculum, the current assessment system does not support this aim of the curriculum policy. Furthermore, the Turkish education system has placed emphasis on reading skills and reading knowledge in general. Until now, however, the development of the reading attitudes of young people, including pleasurable reading and life-long reading, has been not considered in a broader sense. One of the ways of addressing this gap is by investigating young readers’ reading interests and their interaction with texts. This was the aim of this inquiry.

2.1.2.2 Reading Campaigns

Despite the National Curriculum’s lack of encouragement to read for pleasure, in the last decade young people’s attitudes towards reading has been on the agenda. Various campaigns have been launched to promote reading across the country. In 2005, the Turkish Ministry of Education prepared a list of ‘100 Basic Works’ for both primary and secondary school students, which consisted of national and world authors’ works (Çotuksöken, 2007). Since then, discussions and studies about reading and the number of published books (Balcı, 2009), as well as the activity of reading itself have increased. In spite of critiques of book choices (i.e. why these books rather than others?) and a lack of supportive education policies, reading has become an important matter on the agenda.

In 2008, ex-President Abdullah Gul and his wife, Hayrunnisa Gül, contributed to reading awareness by launching reading campaigns such as ‘Turkey is Reading’ and the ‘Speaking Book Festival’, through which some reading events took place at a national level in different parts of Turkey. For example, to raise the awareness of reading at a national level, people from all ages were encouraged to read books in football stadiums. The school day began with 10 minutes of reading, and every member of the school, including janitors, students, teachers and head teachers, were encouraged to participate in this activity (Coban, 2015). The media also played a role in such reading promotion campaigns by broadcasting/publishing them. In the following five years, the literacy rates of the Turkish people rose significantly from 92.9% to 96%. In addition to this increase in nationwide reading skills, the number of people who read ‘as an intellectual and aesthetic activity’ (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 1) was found to have risen noticeably from 4% to 6.8% between 2008 and 2013 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013; Ünal, 2013). Non-government organizations such as IBBY Turkey, Çocuk Vakfı, Gülten Dayıoğlu Çocuk ve Gençlik Edebiyatı Vakfı and other charity-run schools contributed to this development through book promotions, reading campaigns and reading competitions. However, after the attempted coup in Turkey, a state of emergency was declared. Just one week after the coup attempt on 15th July, 2016, 15 universities (which were all registered charities), 1,229 education and health related associations and clubs, and 934 charity-run or privately run schools were closed down (HaberTürk, 2016b) due to their unproven connections to the attempted coup. The number then increased day by day, and the total number of educational establishments that have been closed down has increased to over 2,000. Since then, more than 160,000 people have lost their jobs and approximately 57,000 people have been arrested (Turkeypurge, 2017). Before they were shut down, those schools contributed to the reading habits of young people through organizing nation-wide reading competitions, seminars and conferences. For example, Kilicarslan Educational Establishments organized six reading competitions and some of their events were covered by national news sites (MemurlarNet, 2009; Koy, 2014). The effects of these closures and dismissals on the nation’s reading habits have not been investigated yet and such an investigation does not seem possible under the current conditions in Turkey. The next section will focus on the research on children’s literature.

2.1.3 Literary and Reading Research in Turkey

In the 1950s, reading started to attract the attention of some researchers in Turkey. However, until the 1990s, there were only a handful of studies that focused on reading (see Balçı, 2009). After the 1990s, researchers started to investigate issues related to the lack of reading in young people and tried to find solutions for these issues.

According to the Turkish Council of Higher Education's database, there are only 18 doctoral and master's theses with the term 'book reading' in the title, and all of these are quantitative studies. A search of the same database reveals that there are 1,016 postgraduate studies published between 1983 and 2016 which contain the term 'reading' in their titles. However, approximately 40% of these theses were not prepared by Turkish Language or Literature students, but by students from different academic departments, such as Information and Records Management, Linguistics, Computer Engineering, Biology, Religion, Economics and Electronic Engineering. The main concern of these studies is not reading, but their titles contain the word 'reading'. Even if the main inquiry of these studies is not reading, it still shows the wideness of the concept of reading and its connection with other subjects.

In addition, there have been approximately 600 studies (master's or PhD theses) from the Educational Studies and Turkish Language and Literature departments that investigate 'reading'. The studies can be described as either quantitative studies intended to draw a general picture of reading within a particular district (i.e. Ankara city), age group (i.e. 10-12 years old students) or job title (i.e. Turkish Language students), or to offer textual analyses of fiction texts. Given that it would have been impossible to examine this corpus, this thesis has focused on those studies that are classified as follows: reading attitudes; analysis of national course books and fiction books; language development and reading; reading difficulties; reading achievements; disabled children's reading and reading strategies.

A comparison of the focuses of the studies carried out in Turkey and the West in English is revealing. The subjects investigated in Turkey that have also been

investigated in the English-speaking world include (but are not limited to): attitudes towards reading (Conlon et al., 2006), reading rates, reading skills (Harris and Sipay, 1990; Perfetti, 1985; Neale, 1999), reading comprehension (McLaughlin and DeVogd, 2004; Morrow, 2008; Sweet and Snow, 2003), reading in a foreign language (Bernhardt, 1993; Nuttal, 1996; Van Gelderen, et al., 2007) and collaborative reading (Atwell, 1987). However, in Turkey there are some areas that have not received much attention, including the relationship between reading rates/types and academic achievement; methods of reading and reading instruction (Betts, 1946; Calkins, 2000; Fountas and Pinnell, 1996; Graves, Juel and Graves, 1998; Ivey and Broadbush, 2000;); reasons for reading (Clark and Rumbold, 2006); reading disorders (Gibson and Levin, 1975) and reading choices (Beyard-Tyler and Sullivan, 1980).

In addition, a particular area of theory that has been ignored in reading research in Turkey is reader response; the theory has not been translated into Turkish and those who have referred to it have benefited from original English texts on the theory. A few recent studies have referred to readers' responses to particular phenomena, including children's responses to picturebooks (Ulusoy, 2016) and the effects of reading circles (Avcı and Yüksel, 2011; Özbay and Kaldırım, 2015; Süleyman et al., 2010). However, the area is relatively new in Turkey, whereas the area of reader response studies is better established in the English-speaking world including the USA, as will be shown in the following review of the research and interdisciplinary studies on reader response and cognitive studies.

Another area of research that has been widely investigated in both Turkey and in an international context is reluctant readers, with attempts to answer questions that have been debated for several decades, such as 'why teenagers don't read', 'why children read less as they grow up' and 'why the reading rates have dropped recently'. On the other hand, research about 'good' readers (also called 'keen', 'avid', 'successful', 'expert' or 'talented' readers) is relatively low. Thus, although my survey includes students from different reading backgrounds to draw a general picture of reading in a certain district, my interviews and reading sessions focused particularly on successful and avid adolescent readers' reading choices and the effects of these choices. In this thesis, the term 'successful and avid adolescent readers' refers to those readers

who are successful in school in terms of academic achievement, and who also enjoy reading and read at least 30 books per year both in and out of school. I chose the term ‘avid’ rather than any of the others because it connotes desire, interest and enthusiasm (Dictionary.com, 2017), which are, arguably, significant characteristics that make someone read, while other terms like ‘expert and talented readers’ emphasise reading experience or skills. According to their responses, the avid readers of this study liked reading outside of school without requiring someone else’s encouragement, and they also created meaning while reading the text, as described by Wilson and Kelly (2010).

Another aspect missing from research in Turkey is a specific focus on readers who are reading fiction. Along with the reader response research mentioned above, I found only three studies that focused particularly on reading fictional narratives. Kamer Beyaztaş investigated the effects of reading literary texts on public education (1997). He set up a reading group consisting of voluntary participants. He interviewed the participants (aged between 15 and 25) before and after the study and observed them as a participatory researcher to find the effects of reading. After a 12-week study, he found that the reading group offered contributions in several key ways: by making a positive impact on reading attitudes and habits, by reducing prejudice and by increasing confidence and speaking skills. Another study conducted by Nurcan Dalboy (2014) investigated the effects of children’s literature texts on the reading attitudes of children by using quantitative methods and found the texts made a positive impact on reading attitudes. Similarly, another study tried to determine the effects of reading scientific novels on university students’ attitudes towards science (Karakuş, 2014). The students in the experiment group read three novels by Robin Cook while also attending a scientific research methods course, while the control group attended the classes only. Karakuş indicated that the ‘realistic’ presentation of science in those books plays a crucial role in her book choice. Karakuş’s findings suggested that reading scientific novels did not make any difference in the students’ attitudes towards science. However, some similar studies in the West with a younger age group found a positive influence on students’ attitudes towards science after reading science fiction books (see Kelly 2008; Nordstrom 1992 and Rice 2002 for example).

Recently, Veli Kutay (2014) carried out a survey researching the reading habits of adolescent readers in Turkey and the encouragement they received inside and out of school. He distributed a questionnaire and performed interviews in different parts of Turkey and in different types of schools with the aim of providing an overview of attitudes towards reading. According to the questionnaire responses from a representative sample of 2,425 students in 86 high schools located in eight districts of Turkey, four out of five ‘young people in general read at least once or twice a week outside the school for at least 30 minutes’ and two out of five ‘read every day or almost every day’. He also found that in general, teachers and families encouraged students to read books. However, ‘10 out of 20’ students interviewed ‘did not perceive their teachers’ techniques to encourage them to read as successful’ (Kutay, 2014, p. 240).

The research presented above verifies that there is a lack of qualitative studies in Turkey on ‘reading’. In addition, the emphasis of reading studies is usually placed on general aspects of reading such as ‘reading attitudes and reading habits’ rather than specific areas of reading such as ‘the aims of reading fiction’. Furthermore, I suggest that reader response and reading fiction are the two areas that need particular attention because of the lack of studies in these fields. Finally, successful and avid adolescent readers’ reading has not been considered in research within Turkey. The table 2.1 below shows the common characteristics of reading and literature research that has been carried in Turkey and the gaps that need to be addressed.

Existing	Gaps
Quantitative studies	Qualitative studies
Research on book reading	Research on reading fiction
Research on reluctance to read and reluctant readers	Research on enthusiastic and keen readers
Research using narrative theories	Research using reader response theories
Research approach from the perspective of one discipline	Research employing interdisciplinary perspectives

Table 2. 1 Literary and Reading Research in Schools in Turkey

For all these reasons, the following study will cover the areas of ‘successful and avid adolescent readers’, ‘reading choices’, ‘reading effects’, ‘reader response’ and ‘reading fiction’. Before presenting a picture of contemporary reading among young people in Turkey, a brief overview of the history of children’s literature and publishing in that country will be provided in the next section.

2.1.4 Children’s and Young Adult Literature in Turkey and How it Relates to Reading

Before the establishment of Turkey, there were traditional oral children’s tales in the Ottoman state. In the second half of the nineteenth century, authors started writing and translating stories for children. The first works for children were published by authors such as Kayserili Dr Rüşti, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Tevfik Fikret and Ömer Seyfettin. The majority of these stories are still being read by children and some of them were included in the 100 Works list compiled by the Turkish Ministry of Education (MEB) (Tuncer, 1995). Between 1870 and 1927, 49 children’s periodicals were published in addition to children’s and young adult texts that were written with the purpose of educating children (Çıkla, 2005; Sınar, 2006). Although the literature does not provide much information on how these books and periodicals were read by their target audience, it at least supports the idea that there were some texts available for children to read. However, due to poverty, wars, the lack of educational opportunities for children in Turkey at the beginning of twentieth century (Akyüz, 2008) and the lack of value given to the children’s publishing sector, the percentage of children who read books was not high in the twentieth century (Ungan, 2008).

Children’s literature began to feature more prominently in research agendas after the 1950s when scholars started conducting studies with titles containing ‘children’s literature’ (Sınar, 2006). There was an increase in the 1970s in the number of books published for children and young adults (Sınar, 2006). However, the series of coup d’états in Turkey, especially the 1980 Coup D’état, had a significant effect on the population’s reading attitudes. Reading was considered a potential element of crime and many books were collected by the regime as ‘organisational materials’ which could encourage crime. Therefore, people hesitated to read books due to the danger of imprisonment that accompanied

reading. Even today, security forces sometimes ‘accept books as crime’ (Ortaş, 2014, p. 329) and people are jailed for reading certain types of books.

This concerning scene has inevitably affected young readers’ attitudes towards books. Unfortunately, considering that after the last coup attempt on 15 July, 2016, books have again become ‘criminal material’, this situation is unlikely to change in the near future. The photograph below (Figure 2.1) shows an example of how people throw books into bins to protect themselves by getting rid of ‘terror weapons’ (Yeni Çağ, 2016). The photo below was taken in Tatvan, a town in the eastern part of Turkey. According to the news report, the author of the majority of the books was Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Islamic scholar living in the US who was blamed for organizing the Coup attempt in 2016. In the photograph, there are some fiction books and religious books including the Quran.³



Figure 2. 1: Some Crime Weapons Thrown to the Ground

(Yeni Çağ, 2016)

As the following photograph also shows, these books and others that were found to be ‘dangerous’ were accepted as evidence of criminal material in Turkey and people were arrested for having them in their libraries (Haberturk, 2016a; Özer, 2016). In addition, 29 publishing houses were closed down when they were found to be publishing this material (Eyre, 2016).

³ This may be an indication of how people were scared of being connected to the crime by having books in their library. Although the Quran was not among the books that were banned after the coup attempt, it may be possible that the owner(s) wanted to escape any possibility that they would incriminate themselves.



Figure 2. 2 Police Displaying Crime Weapons

(OdaTV, 2016)

2.1.5 A Recent Picture of Reading in Turkey

Considering the unstable political situation, it is not surprising that this instability has been reflected in the overall educational achievement of the country. According to PISA reports on Turkey's reading, levels of evaluating and understanding were lower than average with 441 points on the overall reading scale in 2003, when Turkey was 31st among 41 countries; this increased significantly to 464 points in 2009, when Turkey was 41st among 65 countries (OECD, 2009). Similarly, Turkey showed one of the greatest rises in reading among the countries examined in 2012 with 475 points. In 2012, the UK's mean score in reading was 499, which was slightly higher than its score in the 2009 report (OECD, 2009; OECD, 2012). PISA results have made significant effects in different countries by providing a chance to compare reading levels in different participating countries (Gür et al. 2012; Waldow, 2009)

Along with political instability, a number of factors have affected rates of reading in Turkey, including poverty, terror, lack of books and availability of new technologies. The terror in the eastern part of Turkey (especially the southeast) has been threatening the citizens since 1978 and this has been causing problems in many areas of children's lives, including economic, social

and educational problems (Robinson, 2010; Yeğen, 2009). For this reason, children and adolescents from this region read less than those in other parts of the country (Kutay, 2014). In addition, the number of workers who earn the minimum wage or less (around 2.4 million workers have been found to be working off-record) is approximately 5.1 million (34% of total full-time workers) (Aslan, 2015). Although the Turkish Statistical Institute's survey findings show a 5.9 % child employment rate for children between the ages of 6 to 17 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012), this finding is questionable because it is difficult counting the children working illegally in different sectors, as the Syrian refugee children do (The Guardian, 2016). Considering the families who have to live on the minimum wage, which is 1,300 Turkish lira per month (approximately £345), and children who have to work to support their families, the possibility of buying and reading books does not seem too high for those children (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2016; wageindicator.org, 2016).

A lack of libraries and lack of books in those libraries are other significant factors that can impact on reading attitudes. In Adana city, the site for this research, where the population is over two million, there are only seven libraries, only one of which is a children's library. There are children's sections in the other libraries. However, the majority of available books are old books with worn covers because libraries are unable to keep up to date and acquire new publications. This makes libraries unattractive places for young readers (Neyi ile Meşhur, 2013). What is more, according to Abdullah Şahin et al.'s research (2009), school libraries do not respond to the needs of students because, in general, they do not contain recent titles. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of financial support from the Turkish Ministry of Education. Some school libraries are used for different purposes, such as storing course materials including maps, technology tools etc. rather than as a library. For this reason, libraries are not very appealing places for students in general.

On the other hand, there has been a rise in the publication of national and translated children's and young adult books in the last two decades. Many contemporary young adult and children's books are being translated into Turkish. It is possible to find translations of popular works of fiction within a few months of the original publication. *The Hunger Games (Hunger)*, *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*,

Game of Thrones and *Fifty Shades of Grey* are some examples of these rapidly translated book series. These kinds of fantasy and romance fiction books are highly popular among young readers (Kutay, 2014). They do not only seem to be reading these books, but also trying to become authors of similar stories. The online reading and writing platform Wattpad has become highly popular among adolescent readers/writers who publish their stories there (Uğraş, 2015). These stories are usually fanfiction, a term which ‘refers to stories produced by fans based on plot lines and characters from either a single source text or else a “canon” of works’ (Thomas, 2011). It is possible to see adolescents reading Wattpad stories in the classroom using their mobile phones (Coban, 2015), but the curriculum and education policy or teachers have not considered this common reading/writing platform yet.

Another matter for investigation is the limitations regarding the book choices that adolescents have a chance to make. Even though the books suggested by the Ministry of Education or by teachers are published by various publishers, books by certain authors are prioritised. Therefore, young readers are limited from accessing variety of books by authors they want to read. Dilidüzgün stresses that there is a lack of support for children’s and young adults’ reading and reading choices in the classroom (2006). This is because the books they are offered or asked to read in the school do not usually correspond to the needs or tastes of adolescents.

Another issue to generate debate was the ‘100 Basic Works’. According to Kutay’s (2014) study, only three fiction books from the 100 Basic Works list compiled by the MEB appeared among the top ten favourite books of adolescent readers in Turkey (148). In the high school list of the 100 Basic Works chosen by the MEB, there were no contemporary works, and there were only a few works published after the 1980s (Çocuk Vakfı, 2009). In addition to the problem of the appeal of the texts in the list, reading studies in Turkey have criticized the list from a variety of perspectives including, but not limited to, the texts’ suitability in terms of language, style and content, the fact that the list did not include books by contemporary authors (Çocuk Vakfı, 2009) and that the selection was done according to undefined criteria (Dilidüzgün, 2006).

Canan Aslan, a children's literature scholar, brings another perspective to the argument. Aslan analysed 13 books from the 100 Basic Works list in relation to the depiction of women in the stories (Aslan, 2010). She found that women were presented from a 'negative' point of view in eight of out of ten books. Females are shown as objects of violence, doing the washing up, cooking, knitting, sitting at home, and not making use of mass communication tools such as books and newspapers (Aslan, 2010). According to literature scholar Sedat Sever (2006), works considered as 'basic' should have established a love for reading and encourage individuals to read more. However, considering the issues highlighted above, the possibility of gaining such benefits from reading the 100 Basic Works is questionable. As long as the MEB does not consider the needs and interests of the target audience, these concerns and issues will remain unsolved. Since they ignore the fact that young readers are generally drawn to contemporary fiction such as *Harry Potter*, *Hunger* and *Twilight*, all of which were among the top ten favourites in Kutay's study (2014), the appropriateness of the Turkish curriculum and the MEB's reading suggestions for adolescents seems questionable.

The final matter I would like to point out regarding the current situation in terms of reading in Turkey is related to the Turkish national course books that are used in secondary classrooms. Similar to what was offered in the '100 Works' list, the majority of the texts included in the Literature and Language curricula cannot be considered children's or young adult literature texts. There are informative texts about the lives of historical figures, natural events, etc., and adult literature texts which are not suitable for children, especially in terms of language. According to Dilidüzgün (2006), the main function of children's literature is to increase its readers, children's, interests in reading, making them think without boring them and activating their thoughts about themselves and surroundings. However, it is rare to find such children's texts included among the course books. Given the absence of such children's texts, it is doubtful that the course books will increase their readers' interest in reading.

The proper use of texts in the classroom is another aspect of the problem. For some time, reading scholars from the Anglophone world have been successfully recommending the use of different reading strategies in the classroom in order to motivate students, to increase comprehension and critical thinking, and to

encourage a more inclusive classroom (see for example Short, 1996; Short et al. 2000; Farrell et al. 2010; Brindley et al, 2007; Cliff Hodges, 2010). However, in the Turkish classroom, reading activities have usually been left to teachers without strategies being suggested for making reading more attractive (see Dilidüzgün, 2006).

The current situation in Turkey presented in the first part of this chapter suggests that economic and political conditions have affected young people's reading habits. Also, it has shown that young readers' interests and needs have not been properly identified or carefully considered by the National Curriculum and Education Policies. A review of the curriculum and school practices suggests that the curriculum also stresses moral education through literature and this has structured teachers' and students' understanding of literature. It is clear that students have not been seen as active participants in dialogue with literature, but that they have rather been perceived as passive receivers and this is crucial for understanding how the situation can begin to change. The current system encourages memorising but not thinking, responding and criticising. For this reason it does not underpin analysing and reinforcement skills. Thus, choosing suitable books and running supportive activities in which students take active roles may offer valuable contributions to students' reading development (Dilidüzgün, 2006). Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading (1969), which considers readers as active producers of meaning rather than passive receivers, therefore has much to offer not only as an analytical tool, but also as a cornerstone of the inquiry presented in this thesis.

2.2 Reading Research Theories

It is through the Transactional Theory of Reading (TTR) that I have attempted to address the research questions in this study. My analytical approach is also supported by Cognitive Criticism (CC) in order to carry out deeper analysis of the cognitive elements found in the data. For this reason, in this section, I will review both of these theories and their usage in reading research and explain why they have been chosen for my investigation. I will also mention the studies that have inspired my enquiry.

2.2.1 The Transactional Theory of Reading

Wolfgang Iser (1972) argues the traditional view that there is a single, hidden meaning in a text and suggests that a reading is constructed by the reader by filling the textual gaps. Therefore a literary text can earn different meanings when it is interpreted by different readers, stressing the importance of considering the 'act of reading' in understanding the text (Iser, 1978). Stanley Fish, in his review of Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* criticized Iser's ideas indicating the vagueness of his key terms and not having a certain position about how exactly meaning occurs (1981). Complementing Iser's ideas about the active role of the reader in creating meaning, transactional theories of reading have been introduced and developed by Rosenblatt, who adopted the term 'transactional' from John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley (1949) (cited in Rosenblatt, 1969, p. 43). Rosenblatt explains the transaction as follows:

The reader, we can say, interprets the text. (The reader acts on the text.) Or we can say, the text produces a response in the reader. (The text acts on the reader.) Each of these phrasings, because it implies a single line of action by one separate element on another separate element, distorts the actual reading process (1969, p. 43).

In Rosenblatt's view, the reading and the meaning-making process cannot be understood without considering the reader's individual experiences because 'it stresses the possibility that printed marks on a page will become different linguistic symbols by virtue of transactions with different readers' (Rosenblatt, 1969, p. 45). She stresses that the reader's background, interests, aims and skills will influence their reading process and therefore these should be considered in the evaluation of reading habits (1969). Rosenblatt, takes a clear position on how the meaning occurs, by stressing the 'transaction' between text and the reader, escaping the criticism of Fish (1981) about the uncertainty in the source of meaning directed towards Iser.

Rosenblatt describes two stances for the reader: the efferent stance and the aesthetic stance. The first stance relates to the position in which the reader 'will narrow his attention to building up the meanings, the ideas and the

directions to be retained', while in the latter stance the reader's 'attention will shift inward, will centre on what is being created during the actual reading' (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 269). In the first stance, the reader will particularly seek information, while in the second one they will look at the aesthetic elements of the text and their experience will become a 'lived through' experience (p. 269). The aim of aesthetic reading is described by Rosenblatt as 'the desire to have a pleasurable, interesting experience for its own sake' (1982, p. 275). Her assumption is that literature can help 'us to understand ourselves and others' only through 'emotional and intellectual participation in evoking the work of art, through reflection on our own aesthetic experience' (p. 276). Rosenblatt's proposal of aesthetic experience includes the reader's active generating of the text through mental and emotional participation in the reading process, whereas efferent reading limits the reader by paying attention only to gathering information from the text and therefore prevents the 'lived-through' experience. However, Fox (2007) argues that a reader can take both aesthetic and efferent stances at the same time. My focus here is not to differentiate the stances readers take while reading and discussing fiction texts, but I will consider the two stances that participants take while reading the texts in order to reach a deeper understanding of their interactions with the texts. In addition, literature teaching in Turkey stresses the efferent stance as presented above. Considering the aesthetic aspect will help discover what stances students took while reading the texts.

In Rosenblatt's theory, 'selection' becomes an important term; in the reader's purpose for reading, 'stance' and 'selection' are influenced by each other (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 12). The selection process involves paying close attention to some aspects and elements rather than others, which will depend on the reader's stances, feelings and experiences (Rosenblatt, 1988). However, the 'selection' does not only apply to the reader, but also the author, who also holds a stance (aesthetic or efferent) when writing the book according to his or her purpose (1988, p. 22). However, no matter what stance the author takes, the reader may read the text from either stance (Rosenblatt, 1982).

Considering the relationship between the reader's stance and purpose and the 'selective attitude' (1988, p. 12) presented above, I presume that aesthetic

reading is expected to be pleasurable and the reader, therefore, should have the chance to make her own 'selection' in terms of the actual texts when deciding what to read. If someone else is deciding on behalf of the reader and asking the reader to read for a certain purpose (i.e. compulsory reading materials offered in schools), this may prevent the reader from setting a purpose and taking the aesthetic stance. Therefore, I gave my participants the chance to decide on the texts they really wanted to read, which allowed me to avoid confronting them with a compulsory reading practice; this will be explained in more depth in the methodology chapter.

The benefits of using TTR for research have been widely recognised by scholars. In what follows, I will refer to the benefits that are related to my research to explain what aspects of the theory I intend to employ and why.

Richard Beach presents different reader response theories, some of which focus more on the reader ('reader-based'), and some on the text ('text-based') (1993, p. 5). For the purposes of this study, I have applied a reader-focused reader response theory. According to Beach (1993), even the theories that take a reader-based approach 'may adopt quite different conceptions of readers' roles, purposes, texts, and contexts, suggesting that there is no single "reader-response" theory' (p. 5). For this reason, he conceptualises five different reader response theories according to dominant 'theoretical perspectives' that scholars take: the "textual", "experiential", "psychological", "social" and "cultural" (Beach, 1993, pp. 7-9). Although he explains the details of each perspective, he accepts that they 'ultimately intersect and overlap' in some ways as the text, the reader and the response may contain any or all of these perspectives (p. 9). In my analysis, although I will rely on the psychological aspect of reader response theory whereby I will look at the 'cognitive and subconscious' elements of the responses (p. 80), I will also analyse the texts from other perspectives. This is because the investigation of the reading effect does not only apply to a cognitive aspect, but also to the social, experiential, textual and cultural aspects that the readers bring to the text. Research suggests that people's life experiences provide them with knowledge (González et al., 2006). For this reason, readers' socio-cultural environments should be considered to understand their meaning-making process. Therefore, the cognitive aspect will be a crucial

part of my analysis, but I will also investigate the other aspects in order to analyse the data through different lenses.

I particularly selected TTR because it responds to the needs of my research purposes. First, it sees the readers as 'active' agents or 'subjects' who bring their individual components, including intellectual, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects, to the meaning-making process. My intention was to investigate the effects of reading fiction on adolescent readers, which meant I needed to look at individual differences in the meaning-making processes of the readers who actively produce the meaning. Second, this theory enables readers to not only become aware of their participatory roles in the creation of meaning, but also to 'get them to recognize how certain texts guide, control, or even manipulate the reader and how others release the reader and induce a variety of responses' (Ruppert, 1981, pp. 20). This particular feature of the theory considers how participants can begin to consider the power influences behind the production and selection of texts, whether they relate to ideological or market forces.

2.2.2 Cognitive Criticism

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1983) argue that the psychology of literature has three dimensions. The first one is related to the author's psychology and characteristics. The second one refers to the literary text and to the investigation of how the text has been made and what kind of characteristics and behaviours the literary characters have. The last dimension has to do with understanding the impact of the literary text on the reader (Wellek and Warren, 1983), which may require collaborative research. This aspect is especially related to 'mind' and 'emotion'. According to literary cognitivists like Martha Nussbaum (2003), Suzanne Keen (2007) and Blakey Vermeule (2011), the investigation of 'mind' has been excluded from 'human sciences' for a long time and therefore there is a need that 'mind' become the focus in human sciences again.

CC⁴ offers support for reader response analysis. In reader response, the reader's transaction with the text is prioritised, while not paying much attention to 'what text of fiction offer to readers *through various narrative devices*' which is what CC is concerned with (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 11). It considers the relationship between the narrative devices of the text and the reader's emotional and cognitive interaction (Hogan, 2011; Nikolajeva, 2014). Thus, the focus is neither on the text or the reader only, but on the 'literary reading' (Stockwell, 2002). In this way, the theory offers a 'cross-disciplinary approach to reading, literacy and literature' (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 4) that considers various aspects of reading literature, including the textual parameters, authorial voice and what the reader brings to the text (Nikolajeva, 2014). It is therefore a helpful tool to understand the reader's engagement with the literary text and cognitive and emotional aspects of it. Below I will review some studies that take cognitive approaches to reading.

Fjallstrom and Kokkola (2014) investigate this issue and examine how adolescent readers actually respond to fictional characters and the extent to which they may be swayed into adopting the narrative's world view. Based on the Nikolajeva's (2014) categorization of readers' cognitive approach to fiction as 'immersive identification, empathetic identification and empathy' (pp. 84-102), they conduct an empirical study and examine how adolescent readers are influenced by characters. After reading the fictional text, adolescents rewrite the story. Some of them write in the first person and some in the third person through different point of views. They found that participants who write in the first person are more influenced by the character than those who write in the third person. Also, the participants are more successful when writing from the perspective of young characters than from an adult character's perspective.

Djikic et al. (2009) find that reading fiction impacts the psychology of readers and may even change their personality. One reason for this can be found in Zunshine's argument (2006) that fictional lives and incidents can be perceived as

⁴ Different terms have been used in referring to literary aspects of cognitive research which include cognitive narratology, cognitive literary theory, cognitive poetics and literary cognitivism (see Stockwell, 2002; Gibson, 2007; Herman, 2009; and Nikolajeva, 2014, 3). I will use the term 'cognitive criticism' in this research as Nikolajeva (2014) investigated the theory from a children's literature perspective.

real. Likewise, Kaufman and Libby's study (2012) shows that depending on the levels of their self-concept, readers' 'self-concepts, attitudes and behaviours' are affected by the characters when they practise 'experience-taking', which is described as 'the imaginative process of spontaneously assuming the identity of a character in a narrative and simulating that character's thoughts, emotions, behaviours, goals, and traits as if they were one's own' (p.1). Their theory is based on Hayakawa's (1990) suggestion that 'literature has the ability to produce profound changes in individuals by affording them the experience of an almost infinite number of alternative lives and personas' (in Kaufman and Libby, 2012, p.1).

Through experience-taking, the reader becomes a 'victim' rather than the 'witness' of the events. Although it might be questionable to what extent a reader can assume himself or herself as the protagonist, this approach presents some questions about the power of reading. Experience-taking is different from empathy and the theory of mind, although they may all undertake a similar function by increasing one's understanding of others. While empathy is related to the understanding of others' emotions, the theory of mind refers to understanding others' minds. In experience-taking, however, readers imagine themselves as characters and try to think, feel and live what others experience. In experience-taking, it becomes important for the readers to be from a similar social group or have a similar identity to the character whose experience they are taking. This experience-taking might influence the reader's attitudes towards certain subjects or social groups such as gays or black people (Kaufman and Libby, 2012). Therefore, experience-taking is also different from sympathy which refers to feeling compassion or pity for someone else. Likewise, according to Litcher and Johnson's study (1969), reading fiction in which a character is from a different ethnic background improves the reader's empathy towards that ethnic background (in Mar et al., 2008). My research will investigate influences that occur in the 'transactional' activity of reading.

Hayakawa (1990) remarks, 'It is not true that we have only one life to lead; if we can read, we can live as many more lives and as many kinds of lives as we wish' (p. 207). Presumably, while reading a literary text, readers enter a new world and go through the lives of others as if they are experiencing or witnessing

experience without actually experiencing it. However, while ‘living’ the ‘life’ presented by the text, the reader may adopt some of the characteristics of the fictional character and start to live as a person with these additional characteristics. Therefore the act of living ‘many kinds of lives’ may bring just as many characteristics or perspectives to the reader’s own ‘self’. According to Mar et al. (2008), as readers read, they tend to develop similar attitudes to those of the characters presented in the stories. Readers adopt the information presented in the story regardless of its truthfulness. When the reader ‘identifies with a protagonist’, this may lead to an inclination for that protagonist and cause the reader to adopt the protagonist’s attitudes (p. 182). Furthermore, because this experience is usually unconscious, the reader is likely to adopt those characteristics or world view ‘as (he or she) wish(es)’.

Gregorie Currie (1995) claims that fiction may make the reader examine or change his/her own moral values, and this occurs even if the reader is aware that the things that are depicted in the story are not fact, but fiction. He stresses that readers obtain imaginings from the fiction and divide these imaginings into two categories: ‘primary and secondary imaginings’ (pp. 255-256). Primary imagining refers to the ones that are directly depicted by the author, while the secondary imaginings are hinted at by the author and the readers imagine them without reading the depictions in the story. The latter is created by readers and ‘may do moral damage by persuading us [readers] to value that which is not valuable’ (p. 258). In this process, the reader’s identification with the fictional character, ‘audience identification’, will give the reader a chance of better imagining the ‘character’s experience’ (p. 257). If his assumption is true, then the reader who has a better understanding and deeper imagination of the character’s experience should also be more affected by the character. It follows that successful adolescent readers who have a better imagination will be more affected.

In the chapter ‘Ethical Knowledge’ in *Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children’s Literature* (2014), Maria Nikolajeva addresses the matter of ‘ethics’ and ‘ambiguity’ in children’s fiction for the novice reader. She argues that novice readers ‘need guidance in more complex cases’ (p. 195). Parallel to Currie’s idea about the possible ‘moral damage’ that ‘secondary

imagining' may cause, she claims that: "Presenting violence through the perpetrator's eye in a children's book is problematic since it may be perceived as justification and even valorisation" (p. 197). She problematizes Martha Nussbaum's opinion that 'reading makes us better' by stressing the fact that it can work in the opposite way for inexperienced readers, because from Nikolajeva's perspective, 'reading about extreme violence makes us spectators and silent accomplices' (p. 197). To put the theoretical idea into practice, she analyses four fictional texts in terms of the ethical values presented in the books. One of the books is Tabitha Suzuma's *Forbidden* (2010), in which siblings' sexual and emotional relationship is depicted. She concludes that 'novice readers' may 'empathise with one of the siblings and view one as a perpetrator and the other a victim' depends on the reader's gender (p. 204). According to her, the way the relationship is presented in the text may lead to confusion in novice readers as the 'crime' becomes 'dubious' (p. 201). Although this may not be the case all the time, this idea is supported by the research she cites (*Shaped by Stories* by Gregory Marshall (2009) and *How Literature Changes the Way We Think* by Michael Mack (2012)).

Even though Nikolajeva (2014) does not classify the maturity of readers according to their age, she argues that young readers' affective response is expected to be more powerful than cognitive response because of development level of their brain. The former type of response is more associated with TTR, while the latter is related to CC. In my analysis, such differences were not considered because it was not among the objectives of this study, but both kinds of responses were given by the readers as the analysis revealed (Chapter 5 and 6).

A well-known example of Currie and Nikolajeva's arguments about the possible harm of some fictional texts could be the reported effects of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. After the publication of this romantic text, 'men of society used to dress like Werther, and many seemed to have felt, acted and died like him' (Schmidtke and Häfner, 1988). The book led to copycat suicides across Europe and the protagonist's name has taken a place in psychology as the 'Werther effect' (Phillips, 1985). In spite of the existence of some studies that deny such an effect (Durkheim, 1951; Lester, 1972), a large

number of studies suggest that some people are led to emulate characters' suicides after reading or watching their depictions (see Becker et al., 2004; Frei et al., 2003; Gould et al., 2003; Phillips, 1974; Ruder et al., 2011; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. 2015). For this reason, the way this kind of 'virulent' matter is presented in the text may cause 'emotional fluctuations' in the reader. In this text, like some other texts such as some of Shakespeare's tragedies (Kirkland, 1999), readers are 'left with a mingling of pity and admiration for the victim, not reproach' (p. 660). In the current study, the readers' positions on these kinds of 'dubious' and violent matters will also be considered.

2.2.3 A Combination of the Two Theories

TTR and CC are two different approaches to understanding the act of reading and the text. Although there are elements of these two theories that may seem to contradict each other, the theories can also be considered complementary because TTR puts the reader and their background at the centre and highlights the importance of readers' understanding of the text, while CC focuses more on the textual parameters and values what the text promotes.

If, for instance, this thesis relies on the assumption that the reader makes the entire meaning, then the question would be what the point of using the cognitive theory is. However, this thesis will consider the reader's cognitive position while/after reading the text, as well as the cognitive elements that the text offers. Acknowledging the textual parameters, should not be perceived as a dismissal of the assumption that the reader's background, expectations, skills and goals will influence the textual messages and understanding, but as an approach to the understanding the transaction and the effect from a different angle. Again, this is not an approval of what Nikolajeva describes as the 'novice reader' (2014, pp.16-17) who fails to get the 'right' message from the text because of having a limited cognitive development, but an inquiry into the role of textual elements in the position that reader takes against the text.

Both the theoretical and empirical cognitive studies mentioned above suggest that the thoughts and behaviours of fictional characters affect readers. The level of this effect will depend on the characters and the way they are

presented in the fiction, as well as on the reader's cognitive level and reading experiences and skills.

While the two theories differ in several aspects, Craig Hamilton and Ralf Scheinder (2002) find similarities between the main philosophies of Iser's Reception Theory and Mark Turner's Cognitive approach to literature (1991). One of the meeting points of the two theories they highlight is 'Filling in gaps' (p. 654). Acknowledging CC's roots in Iser's theory, they conclude with the necessity of a direction towards a 'cognitive reception theory' (p. 655), in order for both theories to remain useful. This theoretical claim, is not necessarily a practical route for both theories, however, in the line of their argument and in the light of rationale explained in the previous two paragraphs, it was considered that in this thesis an intertheoretical approach would be fruitful in finding the effects of reading fiction on adolescent readers. This approach, on the one hand, resulted in some difficulties which will be discussed in Chapter 3.9.2. On the other hand, it provided a useful tool to question some theoretical assumptions presented above which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 where relevant.

2.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed two different aspects of this inquiry. The first one is the country, Turkey, which this study focused on. The cultural, political and educational incidents and reforms which have affected reading attitudes have been reviewed from the establishment of Turkey in 1923. There was also a need to touch on some political and economic issues that have affected reading attitudes. The gaps in the curriculum and education policies in terms of reading and literary education have also been addressed. In connection to this, the concepts of youth literature, literary education and literary studies have been reviewed. The purpose of providing this background from a relatively wide range of aspects was to understand the current situation in Turkey in terms of reading and reading research, and to identify the gaps. This has helped me to justify the research methodology and theoretical framework.

The second part of the chapter reviewed the two main theories that underpinned the research: transactional theory of reading and cognitive literary theory. I have argued as to why these theories were selected and highlighted the

aspects that have been central in moving forward to answer my research questions. I am aware of the limitations of these theories and will discuss them later in respect to my findings, in the 'Limitations' section in Chapter 8. The next chapter will focus on the methodological aspect of this inquiry.

Chapter 3 Methodological Basis

In this chapter, I present the rationale and context for my choice of methodology. The following sections will be covered: a) Epistemological and theoretical basis of the research, b) case study methodology, c) research methods, d) sampling issues, e) a description of the study location, schools, and participants, f) the data collection process, g) the analysis process, h) challenges, i) the strengths and limitations of my methodology. This design was adapted from Crotty (1998), Lynch (2014) and Oliver's (2013) suggestions for writing methodology chapters because of the mixed method nature of my thesis.

3.1 Epistemological Perspective: Constructivism

Epistemology is the philosophical foundation of research through which the researcher determines the credibility and adequacy of research (Gray, 2004) and research design (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). The epistemological stance of the researcher will shape the theoretical framework, methodology, and methods. Keeping this in mind, I decided to use constructivist epistemology, which relies on the idea that content and reality are constructed by subjects. From the Constructivist point of view, every individual creates their own meaning, so there is no objective truth as claimed by objectivist viewpoint (Gray, 2004).

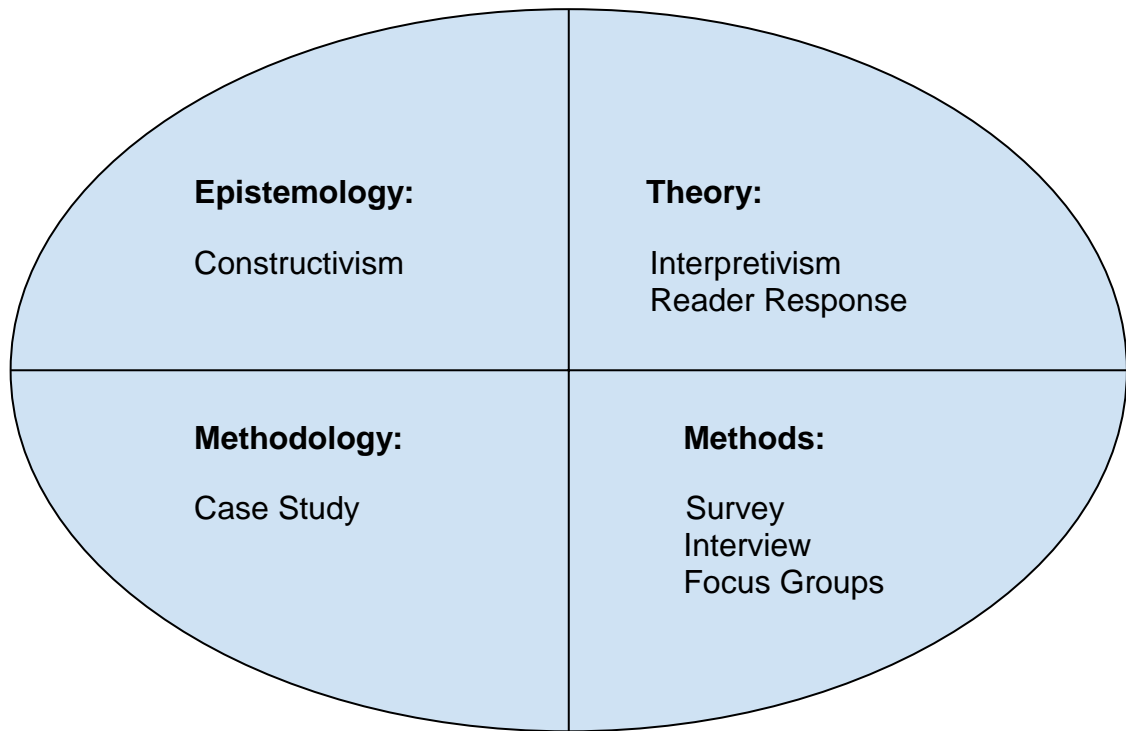


Figure 3. 1 Methodology

(Adapted from Gray, 2004, p.16)

According to Constructivist theory, knowledge is gained through the harmonisation of previous knowledge and new knowledge, and this can only be achieved by an individual's active involvement. In addition to this, the other characteristics of Constructivism identified by Ruddell and Ruddell (1995) are:

1. Being unobservable because of its appearing via interior workings,
2. Arising from a 'hypothesis-testing experience by the individual.'
3. Occurring from the learner's 'inferencing' process, which is defined as 'filling in the meaning gaps' (cited in Tracey and Morrow, 2012, p. 48).

Constructivism is applicable for my research purposes as it considers the learner as an active agent who makes meaning of the world and constructs his/her own knowledge (Gray, 2004). Similarly, I intended to investigate individuals through their active participation in the reading process. To place my research within a theoretical framework, I decided to benefit from Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional/Reader Response Theory because it is within the field of reading enquiry and it is related to how individuals make meaning from texts.

3.2 Theoretical Approach: Transactional Theory of Reading

Transactional Theory of Reading (or Reader Response Theory) relies on the Interpretivist paradigm, which proposes that individuals make meaning of the world through interpretation (Gray, 2004). Rosenblatt (1978) generated the theory by expanding ‘the application of Schema Theory in the field of reading’ (Tracey and Morrow, 2012, p. 54). Schema Theory stresses the crucial connection between the reader’s previous experiences and learning and the text. It also indicates that every human being is different from each other in terms of their generation of schemas in the meaning-making process. This applies to Reader Response Theory because it sees every reading experience as unique and personal (Rosenblatt, 1994; Tracey and Morrow, 2012). Because my focus was on the effects of reading on young readers and their reading choices, I thought that the philosophical approaches of Constructivism and Interpretivism, combined with the tools and principles of TTR, could enable me to carry out my investigation successfully.

Reader Response Theory is found to be ‘appropriate for researchers and students who are primarily interested in students’ responses to literature and the qualitative nature of those responses’ (Tracey and Morrow, 2012, p. 73). As has been discussed in the literature review of the theory, Reader Response scholars have widely used the case study approach in their applications, which is why I decided to do the same for this study.

3.3 Methodology: Case Study

The methodology is a theoretical base of a specific piece of research and a response to the question of ‘how’ the research is/should be performed (Harding, 1987). It involves the researcher’s perspective of evaluating the research, which is shaped by epistemological and theoretical approaches (Lapan and deMarris, 2004).

A case study is an investigation of a particular sample of a whole that ‘provides a unique example of real people in real situations enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles’ (Cohen et al. 2005, p. 181). Case studies usually

investigate small groups or individuals and have a qualitative nature (Lodico et al., 2010). However, my research is mixed, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, and it focuses on a relatively large sample. Having a large sample in a case study approach is not recommended because this may prevent researchers from achieving in-depth analyses of a phenomenon (Cohen et al. 2005). In my study, however, the large survey sample is used to create a general portrayal of the phenomenon, not to make in-depth analyses. I will make deep analyses of interviews and reading sessions. I would like to note that, my decision to go for the large survey sample was due to the lack of pre-existing research on this topic in Turkey.

In addition to the reasons given above, my choice of a case study method relies on the assumption that the in-depth analysis of the effects of reading on adolescents can be truly investigated through case studies. This assumption is based on Cohen and his colleagues' (2005) hypothesis that the case study method is useful in investigating the effects of a particular phenomenon:

Case studies can establish cause and effect. Indeed, one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects (p. 181).

For the reasons mentioned above, I intended to use a case study approach along with a survey method, which would assist me in identifying the effects of reading fiction in one of the real contexts in which adolescents read, in their schools.

As suggested by Lodico et al. (2010), it is important to carry out a study in a natural setting, and school is a natural setting for students (p. 36) as it is a place where they spend a lot of time. On the other hand, there might be problems with this setting for many students because it carries a lot of traditional weight (e.g. exams, obligatory tasks, etc.). Also, the researcher's voice should not be dominant in the study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). School is also a place where the 'power' is wielded by adults rather than pupils. To avoid this and to give students confidence, I tried to make the setting and activities flexible and informal and to earn their trust by building incremental relationships with the

pupils. For example, I wore casual clothes rather than a suit; I engaged with the discussions as they did; I talked about my daily activities, etc. In the following section, I will examine the data collection methods.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

In this thesis, the term ‘method’ refers to a particular research instrument that is used to collect or analyze data; in other words, a data collection/analysis tool (Lapan and deMarris, 2004). For the data collection, a combination of ethnographic and survey methods was employed. These included: a) an online survey questionnaire, b) semi-structured interviews and c) focus groups. In the following section, I will explain how each of these was carried out.

3.4.1 Online Questionnaire

In mixed research, questionnaires may be used to supplement qualitative methods or vice versa (Jick, 1979). Through the online questionnaire, I intended to first gain a general picture of the phenomenon, and second, choose my purposive samples for the reading sessions and interviews. I chose an online questionnaire (Appendix 2) rather than a paper-based one for reasons of time management (Oliver, 2013) that will be detailed in the next section. The advantages of using an online questionnaire include making the questionnaire available outside of school times and having voluntary participants who filled out the questionnaire in their free time without being influenced by factors such as teachers, myself or friends. On the other hand, online questionnaires have been questioned in terms of their validity, sampling methods, application, and design (Wright, 2005). I will justify my use of it, despite these limitations.

One way to minimize the disadvantages of a typical questionnaire is to meet the participants face to face, to explain the study in detail and to answer participants’ questions (Gordon, 1975 cited in Barriball and While 1994). Although I met the participants face to face, the response rate was low, at 17%, something which will be evaluated in the ‘Challenges’ section.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interview

By using semi-structured interviews, I aimed to investigate certain aspects of students' reading in depth. However, while doing this, I wanted to give them flexibility in giving details by not asking fully structured questions. Because the participants' experiences and feelings about reading would be diverse, I did not limit the conversation to certain aspects; rather I explored the new aspects each participant opened. This enabled me to attain a detailed account of their feelings and experiences about the matter (Barriball and While, 1994; Fylan, 2005).

Cliff Hodges (2012) finds semi-structured interviews useful in the investigation of readers' reading attitudes and also in examining the influences of social and cultural contributions to their reading practices, because it enables "each student as a reader" to express their personal opinions (p. 11). For this reason, I decided to use semi-structured interviews in the study. After deciding on this method, I designed a set of sub-questions in my research questions which were explained at the beginning of this chapter. The questions can be divided into two subgroups: reading choices and effects of reading.

3.4.3 Focus Group

My final method, the focus group, involves bringing a goal-directed sample of participants together to explore a particular phenomenon (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014; Wilkinson, 2005). In this research, the goal-directed sample is academically successful adolescents who are also avid readers. In this context, the term 'goal-directed' does not refer to a group that was directed to a particular goal, but a group that was brought to explore a particular issue. There were two reasons for calling this method a 'focus group'. At the beginning of this research, there was a goal set which was exploring how adolescent readers respond to fictional texts they read and how they were influenced by these texts. Thus, it was not simply reading books and discussing them, but finding the reasoning for this reading and the consequences of it. Secondly, because I set this goal before the reading activities began, I had some pre-set questions to ask participants during and after reading the texts (Appendix 7). Although alternative forms are possible (Morgan, 1997), a focus group study may include

‘a goal’, ‘predetermined questions’ (Wilkinson, 1998, p.182) and ‘a discussion of an issue with a group of participants’ from a similar background (Asbury, 1995, p. 415). It is important to note that I was careful not to direct students towards particular answers or to influence the direction of their feelings and thoughts. The 3Words activity (Chapter 6.2) was one of the sessions in which I needed to direct readers the most as it involved the use of different strategy that the participants were not familiar with.

For a focus group method, the similarity of the participants’ age range and social background, the number of participants and their level of comfort in the group setting are all important aspects, as stressed by Rabiee (2004) and Wilkinson (2005). These aspects were all given due care and attention and further details of the focus group and how they have been selected will be given in 3.5.2.

Using responses from the questionnaires, two groups of five Secondary 2 students were selected (two boys and three girls from each school): they came from two successful schools in Adana. These students were among the ones who indicated their willingness to participate in the group discussions. The focus of the group was reading and reading discussions were at the centre of this inquiry, therefore, the focus group method is referred to as ‘reading discussions’ in this thesis.

3.5 Sampling

According to Cohen et al. (2005), when selecting the sample, it is important to decide on the number, selection criteria and the characteristics of the sample. In this section, I will highlight my sampling methods and the limitations of these methods. Where necessary, I will relate this to information about the location and participants.

3.5.1 Questionnaire Sampling

To present the sampling methods, it is important to look at the characteristics of the whole sample. In the 2013/2014 term, there were 997,476 students in secondary schools in Turkey. 498,711 of these were male and 498,776 female. In

Adana, there were 15,144 male and 14,960 female students (30,104 in total, 443 of whom studied in villages) who studied in 1,159 divisions in 259 schools (National Education Statistics, Formal Education 2013/14). At the first stage, I aimed to reach a representative sample of Secondary 2 students in Adana to make generalizations according to the questionnaire results. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) widely used table (p. 608), 379 randomly selected Secondary 2 students would be sufficiently representative of the 30,000 total students. However, besides this, the students' characteristics needed to be addressed. To understand this well, it is important to look at the demographics of public schools in Adana, which is a microcosm of Turkey.

In Turkey, students are placed in high schools according to the average of their high school exam scores and diploma grades. The table 3.1 below shows the average entry scores of high schools in Adana according to school types:

School type	Average entry Score	The number that participated in the study
Science High Schools	475-500	1
Teacher Training High Schools ⁵	430-450	1
Social Science High Schools	420-460	1
Anatolian High Schools	Various between 200 and 480	8
Religious High Schools	Various between 100 and 420	1

⁵ Teacher training schools were opened with the aim of training students to be teachers; however, the students had the chance to study any subject in university like students of other school types. These schools stopped accepting students before I conducted the fieldwork. However I was able to reach the students who started high school one year before then they were closed.

Vocational High Schools ⁶	Various between 100 and 400	3
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Table 3. 1 The Average Entry Scores of High Schools in Adana

(Meb Personel, 2014; e-okul, 2016)

In order to draw a representative sample from these schools, I included all types of schools in the study, and I tried to reach schools from different regions.

In total, I visited 23 schools and got access to 15 of them to apply the questionnaire. The schools included in the study had students of varying levels of academic success, with scores ranging from 100 to 500. There was only one science high school, one social science high school and one teacher training high school in the city, all of which participated in the study. Also, I was able to access students from one religious high school, three vocational high schools, and eight Anatolian high schools. The reasons for including more Anatolian high schools than vocational or religious schools are: first, religious schools are much less common than Anatolian schools, so including more religious schools would not give me a representative sample; and second, the vocational schools that participated in the study were big schools in terms of the numbers of students they had, so I did not need to include more vocational schools. The entry scores of Anatolian high schools varied to provide the participation of students with different levels of academic success.

Although every detail was considered for the sampling, some inescapable issues appeared after the study. The main issue I faced is inequality in the number of participants according to schools and gender; this ‘nonresponse error’ appears in the absence of sufficient responses from the selected sample and reduces the representativeness of the sample (Assael and Keon, 1982). Some schools had over fifty participants, and some schools had only one. Students from vocational schools were especially uninterested in the study. One reason why they did not

⁶ These schools are named differently in terms of the vocational education they provide. They are not typically preferred by successful students with high scores. However, some of these schools, especially health schools, are preferred by average students due to the job opportunities they provide.

have an interest is that the vocational schools aim to teach a particular vocation rather than preparing students for further study; the focus is more on the vocation and practice than reading and theory. Also, as presented in the Table 3.1 above, the average entry score to these schools is much lower than the other types of schools. Also, female students showed significantly more interest than their male peers. The most likely causes of this could be that they liked reading more than their male peers did, and the findings support this claim.

There was a chance to prevent this issue up to a point, by carrying out the study during school hours and by utilizing a paper-based questionnaire. By choosing an online survey, I wanted to include the ones who were really keen on answering questions related to reading; because it was an online survey, some enthusiasm was required as they needed to make an extra effort to access the survey in their free time. In addition, some students do not like school courses and regard these sorts of studies as an 'escape' when they are carried out during school time. In order to prevent this, I did not carry out the study in the school hours. Instead, I gave the survey link to those who wanted to fill in the questionnaire outside of school hours.

However, I needed to survey some students during school time in order to reach a sufficient number of students, because in some schools, students were not keen to fill in the questionnaire at home or did not have internet access.

The questionnaire was not only useful for me as a researcher collecting data, but also for students who could reflect on themselves in terms of reading. The idea of participating in a PhD study, supervised by foreign scholars in a well-known university, was also encouraging and exciting for the students and, for this reason, I did not want to discourage them by setting number limitations. I will explain in the analysis methods section how I overcame this issue.

I managed to reach and explain the study to about 2,500 students.

Approximately 700 students showed an interest and 381 responded to the online questionnaire. Although the idea of the online questionnaire attracted students' attention at the first stage, when they realized that it was about reading, some of them decided not to participate as they were 'not reading at all'. I will discuss this matter in the analysis chapter.

Second, as Cohen et al. (2005) rightly point out, when designing methods, it is important for the researcher to consider ‘time and cost’ (p. 75). Because I had selected a mixed method approach, I opted to use an online survey method, which is more practical and has more features than traditional paper-based questionnaires (Wright, 2005). Otherwise, the data would become unmanageable. There were open questions as well as multiple-choice ones in the questionnaire, so it would have taken a long time to transfer this data from papers to a computer.

3.5.2 Sampling for Interviews and Reading Discussions

I intended to choose purposive samples for interviews and reading sessions to have a detailed account of reading choices and effects, as recommended for qualitative approaches (Yin, 2011). I selected ten students from two successful schools based on their responses to the questionnaire. I intended to focus on academically successful adolescents who are also avid readers. Therefore, I chose two schools that accepted students with the highest high school exam scores. The specifics of the responses in the questionnaire and the students’ interest were also important. Although some students from other schools had shown great interest in participating in the reading sessions, I could not include them in the study as there were not enough students who had the qualities explained above.

The schools chosen are in different council areas in Adana and have different student profiles in terms of the education structure of schools. The reason for choosing different types of schools relies on the assumption that the students are likely to have different tendencies in terms of their intellectual lives. Yin (2011) stresses the significance of having participants who have varied perspectives, even opposing views in the area of research. He finds this useful in preventing the researcher’s bias from influencing the study by choosing only participants who support his/her own hypothesis instead of examining contrary views by contrasting them with each other. From this point of view, I did not select participants only from the different type of schools, but also from

different reading interests⁷ and worldviews⁸ about some particular matters including religion and politics. The criteria below were considered when choosing students according to the questionnaire for reading sessions and interviews:

1. Studying in a successful school
2. Showing an interest in reading activities
3. Showing an interest in and love of reading
4. Giving consistent responses to the questionnaire
5. Reading at least 30 books in one year.

3.6 A Picture of the Study Location

Adana is the 5th largest city in Turkey with a population of 2,165,595 (Adana Governorship, 2015a). The main employment opportunities are in the areas of farming, industry and the civil service (Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı, 2011).



Figure 3. 2 Study Location

(Çukurova Council, 2012)

⁷ By 'different reading interests' I mean the types of books they like to read. For example, one student liked reading romance, while another liked crime fiction.

⁸ One could question how I managed to understand the participants' worldviews from the questionnaire only. There were questions in the questionnaire where I asked the participants' favourite tales, favourite books and the most influential scene in a book they had read. Students' answers to these questions, with the help of other questions, gave me some hints about their worldviews. Details about the participants can be found in the participant information section.

There are seven libraries in the city which, at the time of the study, had 214,457 books in their collection and 5,215 total members in 2013 (Adana Governorship, 2015c; Neyi ile Meşhur, 2013). According to the Turkey Reading Culture Map research (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011) which was carried out in a representative sample of both rural and urban parts of 26 cities and included 6,212 participants, approximately 2.5% of the total population in Adana were library members and about 6% people used public libraries (See map below). According to this report, Adana was among the cities that had the lowest library usage.

Do you use Public Libraries?

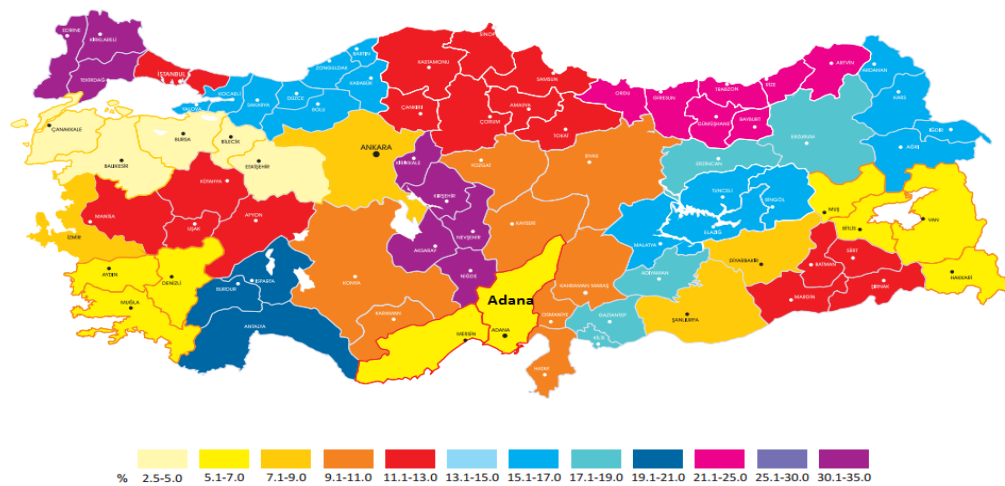


Figure 3. 3 The Usage of Public Libraries in Turkey

(The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011, 22)

In 2015, the literacy rate of males was 98.49% while that of females was 92.59% in Adana, whereas the overall rates in Turkey were 98.66% for males and 92.59% for females. Approximately 10% of the total population were university graduates, and nearly 0.7% of them had a postgraduate degree (Adana Governorship, 2015b).

Parallel to library usage, the average number of books read per person in one year in Adana was between six and seven, which is lower than the average for Turkey, 7.2 (Türkiye'nin Okuma, 2011). The map below shows the details:

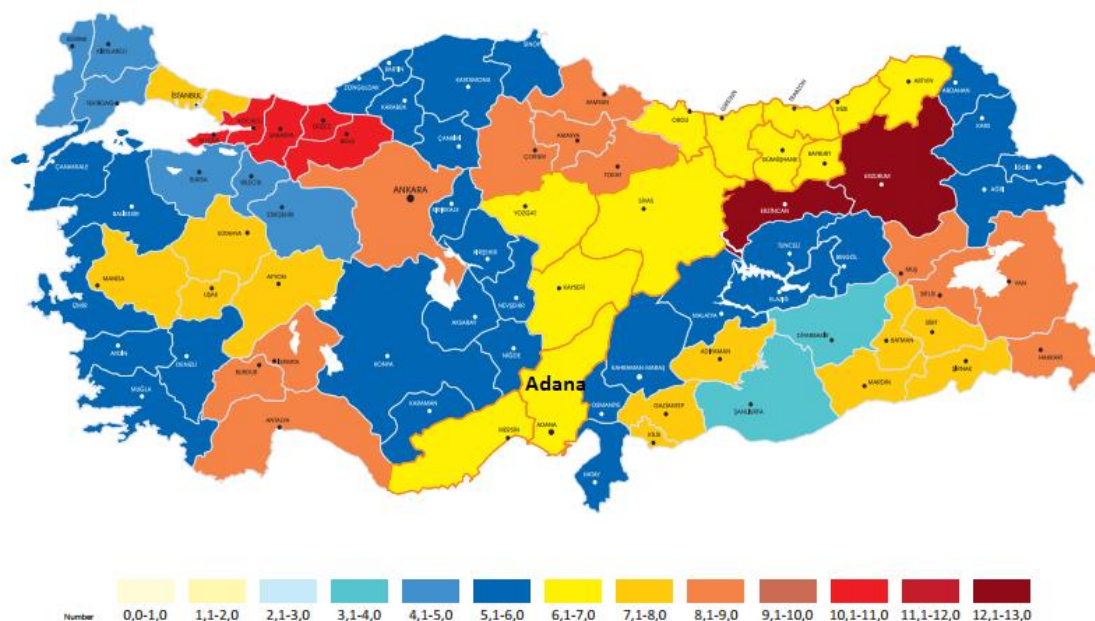


Figure 3. 4 Average Number of Books Read Per Person in One Year

(The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011, p. 16)

There are both public and private school choices for students. They both follow the national curriculum. Similar to public schools, there are different types of private schools including Anatolia schools, science schools, and vocational schools.

3.7 Information about Books and Book Selection Criteria

11 books were read and discussed in the reading sessions. Students were offered 15 books from both contemporary Turkish and World youth fiction, as well as some classic texts in different genres including crime, fantasy, romance, historical, adventure and science fiction. They were advised that they should choose one, read it, choose the chapter or pages they liked most, and then offer it to their friends to read. I also informed them that apart from the books I offered, they could read any other fictional book they wanted. After everyone had read a particular book, we discussed it as a group.

To start reading discussions⁹ in advance, I chose a book and a chapter instead of waiting for them to complete a book, and handed out a photocopy of the chapter to the students. We had the chance to discuss chapters from 11 books in the reading sessions; three of the books were offered by the students. These three books were the books that they already started reading before participating in reading activities. In order for readers to understand the reading discussions, I will now provide a profile of each book, my reasons for offering this book and information about the chapter we read. The subsequent list also includes a book on which two questionnaire questions were based.

⁹ In literary studies, different terminology has been used to refer these kinds of gatherings around books, such as reading circles (Avcı and Yüksel, 2011; Özbay and Kaldırım, 2015); reading groups (Beyaztaş, 1997); dialogic reading (Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003); joint reading (Bus et al., 1995) and shared reading (especially to refer to pre-school children's reading activities with an adult) (Ann Evans and Saint-Aubin, 2005). I decided to use the term 'reading discussions' to refer to the reading activities carried out in the study with two groups of five readers, because although the basic principle of encouraging participation and dialogue is the same, the discussions in this study emerged more naturally, with only a few beginning prompts from me.

3.7.1 *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green (2012)

Overview	The story of two youngsters, Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters, who both have terminal illnesses. They meet in a cancer support group and fall in love with each other.
Chapter Read	The first chapter, which contains Hazel's argument with her mother about going to support group, then her visit to support group, meeting with Augustus and discussions around death and being memorable.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bestseller in major sites including <i>The New York Times</i> and <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> (New York Times, 2012; The Wall Street Journal; 2012)2. It is chosen with the intention that it contributes to understanding people with special needs or who feel like 'others',¹⁰ in society.
Offered by	Me
Selected by	Snowbird

Table 3. 2 *The Fault in Our Stars*

¹⁰ In this thesis, by 'others' I wanted to indicate those who are excluded from a certain group or a society for being different by any means. In other words, it refers to those who are perceived as different and therefore treated differently (othered), but not necessarily to those who are different for any reason.

3.7.2 *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (2008)

Overview	The first book of <i>Hunger</i> trilogy. It tells the story of Katniss Everdeen, who lives in one of the districts of the country of Panem, which is led by wealthy people, called Capitol. Capitol forces twelve districts to randomly select two young people, 'tributes' who represent their district by fighting in an arena, which is broadcast on live TV. In the end, only one survives, which brings that tribute an award. The story is focalized through the eyes of 16-year-old Katniss, who takes her little sister's place to fight in the games.
Chapter Read	5th chapter, depicting the makeup and publicity process of chosen tributes, especially of Katniss and her partner Peeta from 12th District, and Katniss' first impressions of Capitol.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An international bestseller. 2. I intended to choose a book in which materialist and consumerist culture are depicted, and this book fit this purpose.
Offered by	Me
Selected by	Me

Table 3. 3 *The Hunger Games*

3.7.3 *The White Ship* by Cengiz Aytmatov (1972)

Overview	Depicts the psychology, dreams, and frustrations of a six-year-old boy who lives with his grandfather, Mumin. Mumin works for Orozkul, who is a symbolic violent archetype. Mumin tells the child a legend, which the child believes, in which a hero deer, called Maral Ana, saves their two Kirghiz ancestors from enemies and brings them up. Then one day, Kirghiz people start killing deer. Therefore, Maral Ana leaves the country with her children. The grandfather tells the child about his belief that Maral Ana will come back one day, and she does. But under the influence of Orozkul, he shoots Maral Ana. When the child sees this incident, he walks into Issyk Kul, a lake, to realize his dream, which is to meet his father in Issyk Kul.
Chapter Read	Chapter IV and the last chapter, in which the Maral Ana Legend is told and the child learns about Maral Ana's murder.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This is one of the books that I liked most. 2. While I was selecting books, I had opened a discussion topic on Facebook about favourite books that my friends read when they were children or young. This book was mentioned by several people. 3. I intended to include a book with the theme of child psychology and power relations between children and adult. This book fit that purpose.
Offered by	Me
Selected by	Panther

Table 3. 4 *The White Ship*

3.7.4 *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon (2004)

Overview	The story of a 15-year-old autistic child, Christopher, who tries to solve the mystery of a dog's death. As he deals with this mystery, he discovers that his mother is still alive and his father has been lying to him. His unique approach to everyday events makes the story attractive.
Chapter Read	Chapter 71, in which Christopher criticises people's perception of people with special needs.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offers insights into an autistic child's life. 2. Winner of several awards including the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize (Eccleshare, 2003) and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award (BBC, 2004) 3. During the Facebook discussions, three of my colleagues mentioned how much they liked this book.
Offered by	Me
Selected by	MagicBookmark

Table 3. 5 *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

3.7.5 *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1998)

Overview	The story of a little prince who lives on a small asteroid and visits six planets including the Earth. All of the planets are managed/inhabited by adults who have strange characteristics and jobs.
Chapter Read	The first chapter, in which the narrator talks about his experiences of drawing and how adults did not understand and underestimated his drawings.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was chosen as the best novella of the twentieth century in France. 2. One of the best-selling literary texts. 3. Although its main character is a child, the book brings adultish issues under discussion. 4. It depicts the differences between childish views and adult views, which were the issues I intended to explore.
Offered by	Me
Selected by	Kdr

Table 3. 6 *The Little Prince*

3.7.6 *Dance with Heroin* by Canan Tan (2012)

Overview	This bestselling Turkish youth fiction depicts two university girls' struggle with heroin. Eylul starts university and stays in a dormitory where she meets her heroin addict friend, Dunya. Eylul wants to help Dunya give up heroin; however, she becomes addicted herself. Dunya dies of heroin with the golden shot; Eylul tries to escape that end.
Chapter Read	Chapter 10, which depicts the time Eylul tries marijuana on the recommendation of Tarik, who is one of Dunya's druggie friends. Chapter 10 and 14 depict Eylul's poisoning of herself and the things that happen after that.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The author is one of the bestselling youth fiction authors in Turkey. 2. The book is a popular youth book about a social issue, drug use, which is increasing among adolescents in Turkey from the age of 13th (TUBIM, 2014).
Offered by	Me
Selected by	Isfendiyar

Table 3. 7 *Dance with Heroin*

3.7.7 *My Brother's Story* by Zülfü Livaneli (2013)

Overview	Although this adult fiction centres on a murder that takes place in a village near Istanbul, it is more about a journalist girl's investigation, during which she meets a neighbour of a victim who is an ill man, Ahmet Bey. Because of his illness, he is unable to understand what people are feeling and thinking. To be able to cope with this difficulty he reads all kinds of books so that he can understand feelings and thoughts. He tells the journalist the story of his brother part by part, and this makes her visit him. In the end, he solves the murder and writes a letter to the girl to inform her before he is found dead, which brings another mystery into the investigation.
Chapter Read	The first chapter, in which the murder information is given to Ahmet Bey and the journalist comes to ask him questions about the victim. Ahmet Bey's house, in which each room is given a name of book genre, is also depicted in the chapter.
Reason for Offering the book	It was one of the books Radley chanced upon through a recommendation from one of her friends and her online search for the book.
Offered by	Radley
Selected by	Radley

Table 3. 8 *My Brother's Story*

3.7.8 *The Sinner* by Tess Gerritsen (2003)

Overview	One of the books in the Rizzoli and Isles series by the bestselling author. There are two murdered priestesses at the centre of the investigation in this crime fiction.
Chapter Read	The first chapter was chosen by Tess, which depicts the investigators' (Rizzoli and Isles) first investigation of the crime scene. Tess chose this chapter because otherwise the other chapters 'would not make sense' to her friends.
Reason for Offering the book	Tess had been reading Tess Gerritsen books, and this was the book she was reading at the time the study started.
Offered by	Tess
Selected by	Tess

Table 3. 9 *The Sinner*

3.7.9 *Peace Street* by Şule Yüksel Şenler (1977)

Overview	<p>This story depicts the contrast between religious and nonreligious people of Turkey in the second half of the twentieth century. There is a peaceful street in Istanbul where people are friendly and religious. When a modern apartment is built on the street, some nonreligious people move there. The handsome boy of the street, Bilal, falls in love with a modern girl, Feyza, from the apartment. However, he gets married to another girl who is religious. Likewise, Feyza gets married a boy from her culture. One day, Feyza turns into a religious person, divorces her husband and meets Bilal, whose wife has already passed away.</p>
Chapter Read	<p>The chapter BoiceLove chose depicts the argument between Feyza and her husband, Selim, upon her statement of decision to wear a scarf according to Islamic tradition; and then their visit to a club by the enforcement of Selim and Selim's beating of Feyza in the club.</p>
Reason for Offering the book	<p>I intended to include a religious novel among the books I offered the students, and this is one of the best-selling and most discussed religious novels in Turkey.</p>
Offered by	Me
Selected by	BoiceLove

Table 3. 10 *Peace Street*

3.7.10 *The Disconnected* by Oğuz Atay (1972)

Overview	It centres on a man called Selim who is an intellectual, but is not understood by others and so feel othered in society. One day, Selim commits suicide and Turgut, who take him as a role model, investigates the reason for this suicide. The book is a character novel.
Chapter Read	The chapter entitled 'Ne Yapmalı (What should be done)' was read. The chapter presents a self-discussion around the ways to solve social problems. It has a philosophical feel, rather than narratological one.
Reason for Offering the book	BookMonster had been reading this crossover book when the study started. She wanted to continue this book and offer a chapter from it instead of choosing another book to read. It is perceived as a milestone in Turkish literature in terms of its style and narratological structure.
Offered by	BookMonster
Selected by	BookMonster

Table 3. 11 *The Disconnected*

3.7.11 *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo (2000)

Overview	12-year-old Sade and her younger brother Femi live in Nigeria. Their father, Folarin, is a journalist who tries to write the Truth about the terrorist government. One day, his wife is shot by the government's men. Therefore, Folarin sends the children to London to live with their uncle. Their struggle for life in this new country is depicted in the book.
Chapter Read	The first chapter, in which the murder is depicted, was included in the questionnaire.
Reason for Offering the book	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was the winner of the Carnegie Medal in 2000. 2. I wanted to use some scenes from this book that are related to refugee problems, which influenced me to investigate its effect on adolescent readers in Turkey.
Offered by	Me
Selected by	The chapters from this book were used in the questionnaire, not in the reading sessions. I translated relevant parts into Turkish as it has not been translated into Turkish yet.

Table 3. 12 *The Other Side of Truth*

3.8 Data Collection

3.8.1 Episode 1: An Exploratory Pilot Study

Pilot studies are usually a smaller version of the main study, run with the aim of testing the elements of the proposed study to reduce the possible risks (Arain et al., 2010). As well as having these aims, in this particular pilot study, I intended to test and train myself in terms of empirical research and to get a broad sense of reading habits in Turkey. This was a kind of pilot case study that Yin (1984) calls an ‘exploratory study’ with regard to its consequences.

For the reasons above, I made my pilot study somewhat larger than a typical pilot study; in the end, it involved 10 teacher interviews (including four primary teachers, four language and literature teachers, one deputy principal and one school director), 14 parent interviews, 20 student interviews, 54 questionnaire responses from one primary and one secondary school, and eight reading sessions in each primary and secondary level.

Although I did not transcribe all of this data, I achieved my goals for this study as I listened to interviews, transcribed some reading sessions and analyzed questionnaire data, which enabled me to get a picture of the reading habits of adolescent and child readers in Adana. This also enabled me to first, narrow my focus down by selecting some particular activities, methods, objectives and aims from the pilot study and designing the main study, and second, to make a more precise estimation of what challenges I could face and of how long each activity could take. Therefore, it possible to call this study an exploratory study.

Although the methods and tools of this study were similar to those used in the main study conducted in 2015, I am only presenting data from two relevant reading sessions from this pilot study. This is because I changed the objectives of my research after this pilot study, which was designed to investigate the reading attitudes of adolescent and child readers in general, as well as having similar goals to the main study in terms of investigating adolescent readers’ reading choices and the effects of these choices through reading sessions and interviews.

3.8.2 Episode 2: Pilot 2

A review of the literature and the results of the first pilot study allowed me to see the gaps in the area, and I therefore determined that I wanted to focus on reading choices and the effects of reading fiction. The second pilot study included a small scale survey (35 participants) which aimed to test the online questionnaire that I planned to use in the main study. After applying the questionnaire to a high school in Adana, I realized I needed to modify two questions. Some students indicated that an extract from *The Other Side of Truth* (*Truth*) was too long and they did not want to read it. The other issue was that a multiple choice question which required just one answer allowed the user to select multiple answers. Having identified these issues, I modified the questions by making necessary changes.

3.8.3 The Final Episode

After passing through the ethical process and doing a pre-study, I was able to start data collection from secondary schools in Adana. It took four weeks to collect data through an online questionnaire, reading sessions and interviews. The questions of both the interviews and the questionnaire were intended to investigate reading choices and fiction's effects (see Appendices 1 and 2).

3.9 Data Analysis

Analysis is a crucial stage of research that should involve not only the presentation of the analysis, but also examine the meaning and conclusions that the analysis brings (Yin, 2011). In this section, I will present my analysis methods and identify the computer programmes that assisted me during the analysis process.

3.9.1 Analysis Methods

Because this study took a mixed method approach, I employed both quantitative and qualitative methods according to data types (Cresswell and Clark, 2007). However, I sometimes converted my qualitative data into quantitative data¹¹,

¹¹ I did this for the analyses of favourite texts by giving them numbers according to their country of origin (i.e. Western fiction, Turkish fiction).

something which is called *quantitizing* by Tashakkori and Teddlie (cited in Onwuegbuzie and Combs, 2011) to give a general picture of the qualitative findings. Because of the richness of the data, I chose an inductive approach in the analysis process by creating codes as they emerged from the data and not from my presumptions in order to avoid excluding themes that emerged from the data (Bryman, 2015).

I had the chance to benefit from methodological ‘triangulation’, which is described as occurring when ‘two or more different methods involved could both have been generated within one study’ (Gorard and Taylor, 2004, p. 43). This method enables the researcher to increase the credibility, validity and reliability of the research (Cohen et al. 2005; Erzberger, 1997). In addition to this, in order to present ‘in-depth meaning’, in some cases I needed to make thick descriptions which ‘involve a comprehensive description of the individual, the social context, the characteristics of the community, morals, values, and the like’ (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 35).

As mentioned in the previous section, there were some issues in connection with the representativeness of the questionnaire data. In the analyses, I used the method called ‘weighting adjustment’, which enables the researcher to prevent the dominance of one variable by ‘computing appropriate weights to be applied to the observed values for respondents’ (Chaudhuri and Stenger, 2005, p. 302; Särndal and Lundström, 2005, p. 17). Although weighting has some limitations in its application, including being time-consuming and unsuitable for complex analyses (Dey, 1997; Gelman, 2007), it helped me to employ a similar number from each gender when I compared the genders. However, considering this nonresponse error, I have not generalized the results to the whole sample in Adana.

3.9.2 The Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology

CC is a new area in children’s literature research and at the time of starting my research, there were only a few studies that applied this theory in this field. Without many model/exemplar studies I struggled to understand this theory in an empirical context. Combining this theory with reader responses was another difficulty, because of their different focus. Nevertheless, as the results will also

suggest, TTR and CC worked well together by providing an in-depth account of the research problem using a limited number of participants.

One can ask the question whether a mixed design was helpful in understanding the research problem. I would argue that both the quantitative and qualitative data added in different ways to the research problem. Firstly, the quantitative data helped me to see a snapshot of the overall picture of the problem in the city of Adana. Multiple-choice questions proved an efficient way of figuring out what kinds of books were preferred and why. A draw-back of multiple-choice questions is that the readers did not really have the chance to explain some of their responses. For example, the questions investigating the effects of the extracts from *Truth* were multiple choices (see Chapter 4). If the readers had had the chance to explain what they really thought about these extracts in their own words, the results could have been different, perhaps representing a more accurate picture of the effects. I tried to deal with this issue by asking some open-ended questions; however, given the length of the questionnaire, there were incomplete answers. Also, given the length of the questionnaire, it was probably not the right choice to include two long extracts from the *Truth* because some of the participants did not want to read them. Therefore, the reading discussions provided a more in-depth account of the effects of reading fiction.

On the other hand, the interviews and reading activities enabled me to access a detailed account of the effects for ten readers. Because there has been no previous study in Turkey about reading choices and the effects of reading fiction, it was useful to benefit from both quantitative and qualitative methods. The reason for doing more activities with visual strategies is that visual strategies, in particular, seemed to help participants to express their feelings in a more detailed way by giving them a chance to explain their drawings.

Another challenge of my study was that I collected a huge amount of data, some of which could not be included in the thesis. For example, in the questionnaire, there were some responses to the open-ended questions about the scenes the participants recalled from their previous reading. There were some responses that showed how they were influenced by the texts they read. They sometimes

mentioned a quote from the book they had read for a relatively long time previously (3-7 years), or they described a specific scene that held a place in their memories. These were indicators of how fiction affected those readers but I could not include all of these in the thesis. In this sense, the analysis could have been much broader.

In relation to the validity of aspects of the study, it could be argued that the responses did not express the real feelings of the participants, given that they were aware of the purpose of the study and may have wanted to say things that they thought I would like to hear as an adult researcher from a prestigious university in the UK. It is possible that, especially in the questionnaire, there were responses that did not represent reality because it was an online questionnaire which was filled out in the participants' spare time. Therefore, I had no chance to know who was responding to the questionnaire and whether they were really reading and answering the questions frankly. As I indicated in Chapter 4, I tried to cope with this difficulty by making cross-tabulations of the questions that revealed whether or not there were contradictory answers to the questionnaire. However, I was able to identify only three participants who provided contradictory answers about their daily reading amount and the number of books they read in one year, a fact which does not significantly affect the validity of the questionnaire. I have not identified any other contradictory answers between the other questions. This means that 378 participants out of 381 appeared to provide consistent information. However, among these, there were 16 respondents who did not answer some of the questions in the questionnaire. Again, this issue did not affect the validity and reliability of the results as I considered these as missing answers in the analysis.

In order to encourage participation, it is important for participants to carry out reading sessions in an environment where they feel comfortable. This had been considered during the reading sessions and the students did not seem to be uncomfortable in joining discussions. However, the study had to be carried out in a formal setting, in school and this, I presume, affected their responses. When we were reading and discussing *Peace*, for instance, although students felt freer to talk about this book towards the end of the reading session, they were not as active and talkative as they had been in other reading sessions, even

though this one was the last reading session. There are various possible reasons for their being uncomfortable. One reason for this could be that in a group that consists of students of different genders or backgrounds, the students may not want to express their feelings and thoughts (Arizpe, 2010). I acknowledge this as both a challenge and advantage of the TTR, because on one hand, the participants were not comfortable expressing their feelings about serious matters like religious issues, as mentioned in Chapter 5; on the other hand, there was an important and clear benefit of this particular reading session, which was becoming aware of the fact that there is no harm in discussing serious topics in a friendly and respectful medium.

The final limitation I would like to mention is that the reading discussions were carried out with participants who were both avid and successful readers. In an ideal situation, I would have also gathered and analysed responses from reluctant or average readers in order to obtain comparative data. This will be the subject of a future study. Therefore, the results of the reading discussions apply to the successful and avid adolescent readers who participated in the study. However, the results suggest that this kind of study could be carried out with reluctant and average readers to encourage participation and motivate students to read more.

In a research process, it is found to be important to consider time scale (Bell and Waters, 2014). I realised that I was too ambitious in trying to cover so many aspects of reading in a relatively large area to have a representative sample of all school types (explained in Chapter 3.5.1) in Adana. I could have avoided this tiring process by selecting only a couple of schools and applying the questionnaire to those schools. This would have saved time in both data collection and analysis.

3.9.3 Analysis Tools

I used the SPSS quantitative data analysis program, which facilitates and economizes the complicated quantitative analysis process through computer-assisted calculations (Green and Salkind, 2010). Although I had taken a course about SPSS during my MEd studies, it was a new program for me. Therefore,

Andy Field's work (2009) was my reference book for the analyses; it guided me in learning the details of this tool.

In addition to SPSS, the NVivo qualitative data analysis program, which was introduced more than two decades ago, helped me to categorize and code the qualitative data. There have been some concerns about some aspects of this software, including preventing the researcher from carrying out an in-depth analysis. It should be noted that these concerns not only apply to NVivo, but also to many other types of technologies driven software (Crowley et al., 2002). As a matter of fact, this software has become popular in qualitative inspections, and the practical benefits of it have been widely recognized (Di Gregorio, 2000; Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Walsh, 2003). Its benefits include easing the control of data, examining theories, creating codes (Crowley et al., 2002), and with the contribution of recent developments, 'thinking, linking [codes with each other as well as digital platforms including social media], writing, modeling and graphing' (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, XIV). I found the software especially useful in organizing the data by creating codes and linking them to each other. Otherwise, it would not have been easy for me to manage such a large amount of data.

3.10 Focalising the Researcher: Challenges

3.10.1 Ethical Application Process

One of the biggest challenges for me was to pass the ethical process. I applied for ethical approval from both the University of Glasgow and the Turkish Educational Ministry ethical committee. It took three months in total to get approval from both sides¹². This enabled me to learn how important it is to start the ethical process in advance to avoid unplanned delays.

3.10.2 School Access

Another challenge for me was accessing schools in Turkey. At the first stage, I tried to use school facilities for the online questionnaire. However, it did not

¹² There were delays in obtaining the ethical approval due to circumstances beyond my control, including mistakes on the part of the GU ethics process and a new application procedure introduced in Turkey.

work well because there were only a few schools which had sufficient computer and internet facilities for students. Then I decided to enter classrooms, explain my research and hand out the relevant forms and the questionnaire link to the students who were interested in participating in the study. This was welcomed by many school directors and/or deputy principals. However, some school directors were not interested in the study and did not allow me to access students even though I had permission from the relevant authorities and I was a scholarship student of the Ministry of National Education.

The schools I could not access gave different reasons which included: 1. The students were busy with their studies, and I should not interrupt them. 2. The permission letter I was given by the General Directorate of Innovation and Education Technologies should have been sent to schools by the city national education authorities. However, they had not received that letter. 3. There was no available teacher to help me with this matter. 4. The school principal was not in the school, and the deputy manager did not 'want to take the risk'. 5. A deputy manager said, 'It is examination week for students, so they would not be interested in this.'

In the end, however, as explained above, I was able to access enough participants and collect sufficient data.

3.10.3 Language Issues (Reporting, Quantitative Data, Translating)

The issue of language was another challenge that I faced throughout the study and analysis period. In the first stage, before applying for ethical approval, I had created the questions in Turkish, given that the target group was Turkish adolescents. I then needed to translate these questions into English. As articulated by Aman (2012), a 'word, a term or an expression does not have the same meaning or interpretation in different languages and contexts' (p. 1020); this was evident in some questions which did not make sense when I translated them into English. In order to avoid misinterpretation, it was necessary to discuss the meaning of these terms and phrases with a bilingual adolescent who knew what the terms meant in both languages, as well as with supervisors before and after the fieldwork. Nevertheless, I realised with the comments of my supervisors and proof-readers that some of my wordings did not actually

convey my meaning. This was another challenge within the study as well as being part of my learning process.

3.11 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological issues related to this study. Firstly, it explained the philosophical and theoretical stances that this research relied on. Then, in relation to this, the case study methodology and the reason for choosing this were presented. This chapter also discussed some of the difficulties regarding both quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study and the ways in which I tried to cope with them. Eleven books were used in this study (although participants mentioned many other books in the discussions) and some information about these books and the reason for this selection was explained in this chapter. Finally, I mentioned some challenges that I faced over the thesis development process. The next chapter will focus on the findings of the questionnaire that reveal a snapshot of reading choices in Adana city.

Chapter 4 Reading Attitudes in Numbers

This chapter is where the data analysis starts. It will present the findings from the online questionnaire, which has been analysed with SPSS. The findings have been examined in terms of general outputs and gender differences. Therefore, this chapter will give an outline of the reading choices of 381 adolescent readers in the city of Adana and the effects of reading, which will help in understanding the reading attitudes of young readers in general. The questions asked in the questionnaire were followed up on in the interviews and the participants referred to these topics in the reading discussions as well. For this reason, even though it appears repetitive on the surface, because of the nature of the data (first quantitative, representing a larger area with a more general result and later, qualitative data representing a smaller area with a detailed analysis), the two analyses actually complement each other in understanding the phenomena under scrutiny.

In this chapter, the questionnaire questions are not analysed one by one, because the analysis includes sometimes a combination and comparison of questions. For the purposes of ease of analysis within the thesis, the presentation of the questionnaire questions is not necessarily in numerical order but rather using linked groupings or omitting questions when these were for organisational purposes.

4.1 Amount of Reading

4.1.1 Amount of Fictional Reading

According to the responses to question 4 and 5 in the questionnaire (Appendix 2), the students claimed that they read significantly more fiction books than information books (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The cumulative percentage of reading 0-5 and 5-10 fiction books in one year was 55.3, while the same number in reading information books was 77.8. This means nearly 4 out of 5 students read more than 11 information books, while nearly a half of respondents read a similar amount of fiction books. Additionally, the percentage of students who read more than 20 fiction books in one year was 17.7%, as compared to the around 10% smaller number of non-fiction readers (7.1%).

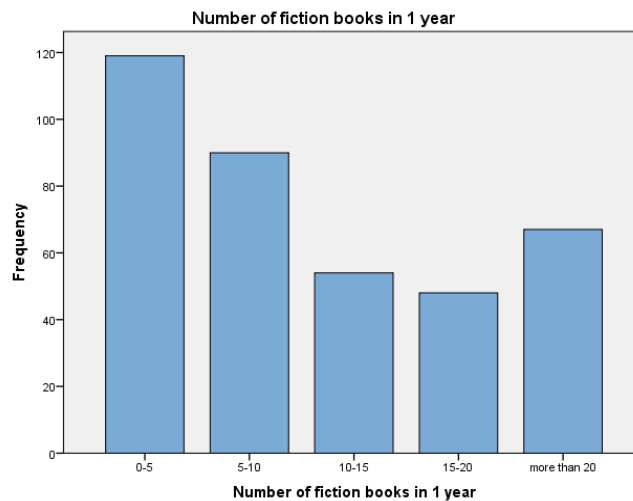


Figure 4. 1 Amount of Fiction Books Read in one Year

4.1.2 Amount of Non-Fiction Reading

48.8% of the total respondents indicated that they read 0-5 information books in one year while 28.8% read 5-10 (Figure 4.2). The percentages of students who read 10-15, 15-20, and more than 20 information books in one year were close to each other (around 7.1%, 7.9%, and 7.1%, respectively).

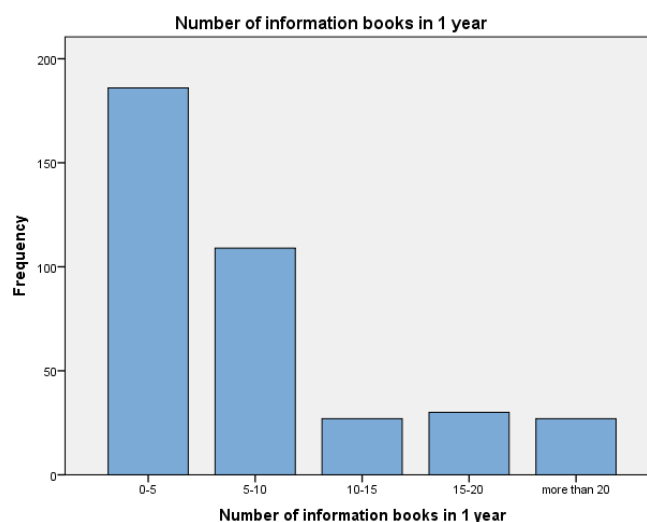


Figure 4. 2 Amount of Non-Fiction Reading in One Year

4.1.3 Daily Reading Amount

Participants were also asked about the amount of time they spent on reading in a day (Appendix 2, question 18). 10.2% of the total respondents indicated that

they did not spend any time on reading. While 23.2% of students read books less than 1 hour a day, half of all respondents indicated they read for 1-3 hours. 16.2% percent of the students indicated they read more than 3 hours a day.

Considering the number of books read in one year, it is expected that the reading hours should be fewer. Nevertheless the correlation between reading time and reading information books ($r = .259$, $n = 314$, $p < .001$) and between reading time and reading fiction ($r = .556$, $n = 313$, $p < .001$), was significant as the P-value is less than .001. There were only 3 students who gave contradictory information by choosing both “I usually do not spent time on reading” and read “more than 20 books a year.” It is unlikely that a person can read more than 20 books without spending any time on reading. However, this did not affect the general validity of the questions. It can be seen that 1 out of 10 students did not read books voluntarily; the reasons behind this will be evaluated in section 4.2.

Similar to findings of previous research presented in Chapter 2, female students spent more time on reading than males ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.34$ and $M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.27$, respectively) and the difference was significant ($t(313) = .000$ $p < 0.5$). The percentage of male students who did not read books was 16.7, which was about 3 times higher than the female students, with 5.8%. Likewise, the number of male students who read books more than 2 hours daily is 18.7% while female readers showed more than double this number, with 39.2%.

4.1.4 Discussion

A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between the number of fiction and non-fiction books ($r = .356$, $n = 30$, $p < .001$). The students who read more fiction books also tended to read more information books.

According to the responses, in general, female students read much more than the males did. In addition, there was no significant difference between male participants' fiction and non-fiction reading choices whereas females preferred fiction more than non-fiction. Although female students' reading rate for information books was slightly higher than their male peers' (24.7% and 18.6% read more than 10 books in one year, respectively), there was no significant difference between the genders ($t(377) = -.981$, $p > .05$). However, the female

participants read more fiction books ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.49$) than the males ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.25$), and the difference was significant ($t(376) = .000$ $p < 0.5$) according to independent samples t-test results.

In summary, male students preferred to read fiction and non-fiction at a similar rate while female students read remarkably more fiction books than non-fiction. The number of fiction books read and the time spent on reading by females was almost as twice the time spent reading by males. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that gender was an important factor in reading choices and rates. This result corresponds to the findings of previous studies about reading habits in different countries (see for example, Benton, 1995; Brozo et al., 2007; Clark and Foster, 2005; Coles and Hall, 2002; Merisuo-Storm, 2006).

4.2 Reading Reluctance or Enthusiasm and the Reasons Students Gave

Participants were asked how much they felt a desire to read, and a Likert-type scale was used to find out the reasons behind that (Appendix 2, questions 23 and 24). In this section, I will show the findings from this question and discuss the effects of environmental and family factors on reading reluctance.

41.3% percent of respondents indicated that they had a lot of enthusiasm for reading while only 5.5% do not have any enthusiasm for reading. The second highest choice was having average reading enthusiasm, with 35.3% followed by “a little,” with 16.7%. According to participants’ level of reading enthusiasm, where necessary, I will discuss 3 types of readers, i.e., reluctant readers (who stated either “no enthusiasm” or “a little enthusiasm” for reading), moderate readers (who chose “average enthusiasm”), and avid readers (who selected the choice “a lot of enthusiasm”).

Similar to the findings about the reading rates examined in the previous section, female students demonstrated notably more enthusiasm than males. 55% of females fall into the category of avid readers whereas the ratio was only 21.1% for males. In addition, only 21.2% of females (in contrast to 26.6% of males) were included in the category of reluctant readers. However, more than a half of the male readers (52.3 %) appear to be moderate readers, which was more than double the female rate in the same category, with 23.8 %.

Through the Likert scale questions, I tried to find the influence of different factors on reading desire. The participants were asked to respond to different statements according to their reading enthusiasm in order to find out the reasons behind their perceptions of their level of enthusiasm for reading. Notably, there were some students who think they were reluctant, but who indicated that they read more than 20 books a year. Likewise, some participants think they were enthusiastic readers but indicated reading fewer than ten books a year. The number of students in who gave this kind of contradictory information was 6 in total.

4.2.1.1 “I Like Reading a Lot,” or Avid Readers

For the readers who were accepted as avid readers, the most obvious indication in reading desire was that they “love reading” ($M = 4.68$, $SD = .658$), followed by the choices “books are relaxing for me” ($M = 4.49$, $SD = .867$) and “reading enhances knowledge” ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .907$). For these readers, the other important factors in reading desire were meeting the right books ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .958$) and using books as a way to escape life ($M = 3.71$). They find that receiving encouragement from parents and relatives having good role models was effective in their love for reading, but this was not as important as the above factors. Therefore, given that they chose “I love reading” and “books are relaxing for me” as the two most important contributions to their desire, these readers’ emotional engagement with books seemed to be a critical factor in their enthusiasm.

Another interesting result was that the majority of students selected “neither agree nor disagree” for the statement “my parents read a lot.” Also, on average, respondents indicated that they were affected more by good role models ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .121$) than by parents who read a lot ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .120$, $t(129) = -5.96$, $p < 0.5$). This means that they had good role models whose attitudes towards reading affected their reading habits (68.9% agree or strongly agree), but their parents’ attitudes were not as important (only 39% agree or strongly agree).

4.2.1.2 “I Do not Like Reading,” or Reluctant Readers

Table 4.1 shows that students who had a little or no enthusiasm for reading (reluctant readers) were affected most by the same factor that made the others read, which was “love for reading.” 29.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “I don’t like reading,” which received the same percentage as the statement “I prefer studying to reading.” For the same statements, 1 out of 5 respondents chose “undecided.” This may mean that half of the respondents did not have a positive attitude towards reading, and half of them preferred studying over reading books. A lack of good role models was another important factor (29.9% agree or strongly agree) for reading reluctance. Related to this, lack of parental encouragement also had an impact on reluctance, with 20.6% agreement. Furthermore, 1 out of 5 students thought that “being forced to read books that I do not like” and “reading books unsuitable to my level” decreases their enthusiasm for reading. The other choices they thought had a negative impact on their reading attitudes include “because of being employed outside school,” “reading does not add anything to our lives,” (15%) and “being prevented from reading” (10%).

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Because of being employed outside school, I don't have time for reading.	Male	35	1.94	.968	.164
	Female	44	2.20	1.357	.205
parents do not encourage me	Male	35	2.37	1.352	.229
	Female	44	2.16	1.180	.178
lack of good role models	Male	34	2.56	1.418	.243
	Female	43	2.47	1.162	.177
forced to read disliked books	Male	35	2.11	1.345	.227
	Female	43	2.51	1.298	.198
I read unsuitable books for my level	Male	35	2.46	1.379	.233
	Female	42	2.07	1.113	.172
reading does not add anything	Male	35	2.49	1.314	.222
	Female	43	1.86	1.037	.158
I don't like reading	Male	35	3.06	1.282	.217
	Female	43	2.16	1.194	.182
I was prevented from reading	Male	35	1.80	1.183	.200
	Female	43	1.70	1.013	.154
I prefer studying to reading	Male	35	2.83	1.465	.248
	Female	43	2.58	1.295	.198

Table 4. 1 I have a little or no reading enthusiasm because...

4.2.1.3 “I Have Average Enthusiasm for Reading,” or Moderate Readers

As for moderate readers, the highest agreement point was that they loved reading ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .981$). In addition, 58.8% of respondents thought that they had no obstacle to reading. However, the majority of moderate readers claimed that they were not reading enough, considering only 25.5% of them agreed with the statement “I think that I read enough books.”

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
because of being employed outside school	Male	61	2.08	1.115	.143
	Female	38	2.34	1.321	.214
parents and relatives encouraged me	Male	59	3.19	1.167	.152
	Female	39	3.33	1.155	.185
good role models	Male	59	3.46	1.039	.135
	Female	39	3.72	1.025	.164
I read suitable books for my level	Male	59	3.56	.970	.126
	Female	39	3.77	1.135	.182
I love reading	Male	60	3.57	.945	.122
	Female	37	3.92	1.010	.166
I have no obstacles	Male	60	3.50	1.081	.140
	Female	36	3.67	1.352	.225
I read enough	Male	59	2.83	1.101	.143
	Female	39	2.82	.997	.160
I prefer studying to reading	Male	58	2.84	1.268	.166
	Female	39	2.79	1.151	.184

Table 4. 2 : I have average reading enthusiasm, because...

4.2.2 Discussion

As mentioned previously, being able to access the right books increased the reading enthusiasm of avid readers while not having this opportunity had a negative impact on the reluctant readers' enthusiasm. A similar picture appeared for the average readers, who thought that they had access to the right books for their level. In this question, by "right book" I meant books that they enjoyed reading and that did not bore them. However, what determines how they got the "right" book is questionable. They had different perspectives on what the features of a "right" book were for themselves. As discussed in Chapter 2, the curriculum in Turkey offered a certain type of books which did not meet the needs of these young readers. Additionally, parallel to avid readers, average readers had good role models, which had a more positive impact than the encouragement they received from their parents and relatives.

Looking at the gender differences, it can be seen that in general, female readers showed distinctively more positive attitudes towards reading than male readers, regardless of the reader type defined at the beginning of this section. For example, females showed a significantly more positive response than males to the statement about their love of reading ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .555$; $M = 4.43$, $SD = .920$, respectively). Similarly, significantly more avid female readers than avid male readers revealed that books are a way to escape from life ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.36$ and $M = 3.11$, $SD = .259$, respectively) and reading books relaxed them ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 0.64$ and $M = 4.04$, $SD = .249$, respectively). In addition, for the statements related to reading the right books and books suitable for their level, more females than males thought that they could find suitable or right books. Another important point was that more reluctant and moderate female readers than males agreed with the statement "because of being employed outside school", I do not have enough time for reading" (18% of females and 9% of males [reluctant readers]; 24% of females and 12% of males [moderate readers]). However, the difference was not significant.

To conclude, the participants showed that their reading attitudes were shaped by the variety of factors including family, relatives, environment, the books they read, and employment. These factors had a positive effect on avid and moderate

readers' reading habits whereas the absence of positive factors reduced reluctant readers' reading interest. In the next section, the focus will be on the adolescents' reading choices.

4.3 Reading Choices

In the previous section, some of the factors that affect the reading rate and reading desire of adolescent readers were discussed. In this section, students' reading choices and perception about the effects of the different contributors to their reading choices will be presented (Appendix 2, questions 6-9).

According to the questionnaire responses, young readers in Adana city liked reading World books (especially contemporary Western fiction) more than Turkish ones. 294 out of 381 students revealed that they have favourite books. Among these books, the number of World books was about three times more than Turkish titles (220 and 74, respectively). It is also interesting to note that among the ones who indicated a Turkish book as a favourite, there was a preference for realist fiction, while the others preferred popular fantasy texts, such as *Hunger* and *Divergent*. The *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series were among their childhood favourites. Turkish classics such as *Kuyucaklı Yusuf* and *Kürk Mantolu Madonna* by Sabahattin Ali and World Classics such as *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy were among other favourite titles mentioned. Books by contemporary Turkish authors such as Canan Tan, Ayşe Kulin and Kahraman Tazeoğlu seemed to be popular among these young readers. These books are usually about love relationships between two young people. This finding is consistent with the literature presented in Chapter 2 (see Kutay, 2014). Reading discussions revealed that after reading these books, Western fantasy books became an important part of their daily reading activities.

Regarding the effects of different contributions to these choices, the students' personal decision was the most important factor, with 82.7% saying "very effective" and 14.7% saying "effective" because, whatever influences they had, eventually they needed to make their own decisions about reading or not reading a particular text. In terms of community influences, friends were the most influential group in the community (65% effective or very effective), which was followed by the influence of family and relatives and teachers (61.5% and 50.5%, respectively).

In addition to the social community, there were other external factors that appeared to be affecting their reading choices to various degrees. 3 out of 4 students found that film adaptations and adverts affected their reading choices. The high percentage of agreement on the importance of book covers (88.5%) showed that a book's appearance was highly valued by these adolescent readers.

	Not Effective	Undecided	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective
influence of personal decisions	.6	.3	1.8	14.7	82.7
influence of book covers	10.9	.6	23.5	29.3	35.8
friends' influence	7.9	.9	26.2	41.2	23.8
influence of family and relatives	13.1	1.2	24.3	40.4	21.1
teachers' influence	16.6	5.0	27.9	28.8	21.7
influence of film and TV series adaptations	24.4	2.9	24.1	23.5	25.0
influence of adverts	21.2	5.9	29.2	27.4	16.2
influence of price	33.3	4.4	33.3	17.1	11.8

Table 4. 3 The effect of different factors on reading choices

In addition, the students were asked about whether they want to read any book. Half of the respondents indicated they have the desire to read a book. They were also asked about the name of the book and the reason for their desire to read that book. Among other reasons, a friend's suggestion, reading a book

series or author, and social media influences were the most chosen reasons for their desire to read those books. There were also a few participants who chose “because I watched its film adaptation” and “my teacher recommended it.”

4.3.1 Discussion

As will be discussed in Chapter 5 there was a significant influence of the Western authors on the participants’ reading choices. On their choices, social community they lived in, such as friends, family members, and teachers had an influence to similar degrees, with the most influential group being friends. About 1 out of 10 students thought friends affected their reading choices. This finding is consistent with previous research and the results of the qualitative data, which will be analysed in Chapter 5. Additionally, price seemed to be an important factor in the participants’ reading choices, with 2 out of 3 participants finding it effective, somewhat effective, or very effective. Furthermore, the significance of book covers, film adaptations, and adverts appeared in the results. These issues were raised by the participants in the reading sessions as well, stressing that books, particularly bestseller books, were prioritised by powerful gatekeepers and sold at a high price. These issues will also be analysed in detail in Chapter 5.

4.4 The Role of Fiction

In terms of beliefs about the role of fiction, students were asked to choose the most important three roles of fiction among 10 choices (Appendix 2, question 12)). The resulting most popular options were “it enhances knowledge” (43.8%), “it helps us to understand others and ourselves” (42.3%), “we find something about ourselves” (41.7%), and “it develops language” (39.1%). This was followed by the choices “it gives us pleasure” (35.4 %), “it reduces stress” (33.3. %), “it is a way to escape life” (28.1 %), and “it educates us” (27.3 %).

4.4.1 Discussion

Turkish adolescents valued the educational dimension of reading fiction (which may include the choices “it enhances knowledge,” “it develops language,” and “it educates us” [cumulative percentile is 110.2]) more than the dimension of pleasure (which may include “it gives us pleasure,” “it allows us to have fun,” and “it reduces stress” [cumulative percentile is 87.6]). However, there were some other options that slightly more than a quarter of participants chose such

as “it is a way to escape life” and “it helps us to make changes in our lives,” which were related to both education and pleasure. Thus, for these adolescent readers, both education and pleasure seemed to be important aspects of reading fiction.

Notably, the participants in general highly valued developing their empathy and theory of mind skills through reading fiction (“fiction helps us understand others and ourselves,” 42.3 %). Looking at gender differences, females chose two particular statements more than males, which were “we find something about ourselves” (44% and 39%, respectively) and “it helps us understand others and ourselves” (45% and 39%, respectively); however, the difference was not significant. On the other hand, significantly more male students than females chose “it enhances knowledge (55% and 36%, respectively). There was no significant difference in terms of gender in the other choices. This result shows that the female participants valued developing empathy through reading fiction more than enhancing knowledge, which was what male participants stressed the most. This result also corresponds to research findings about young male readers’ tendency towards non-fiction and female readers’ tendency towards fiction (Clark and Foster, 2005; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). Here, it may be helpful to go back Rosenblatt’s identification of the two types of reading, efferent and aesthetic, which was discussed in Chapter 2. Given that the majority of male readers preferred reading non-fiction over fiction, and because they stressed enhancing knowledge through reading fiction, these readers’ reading attitudes may be described as more efferent reading than aesthetic. On the other hand, because female readers liked reading fiction more, and they valued aspects such as taking pleasure, finding something about themselves, and understanding others and ourselves, it is likely that during their reading experiences, they experienced aesthetic reading more than efferent reading.

4.5 The Effects of Reading

In this section, the potential effects of reading fiction on adolescent readers will be discussed based on their responses to the extracts from *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo (Appendix 2, questions 16 and 17) and their thoughts about the books they have read so far (question 11).

4.5.1 The Effects of *the Other Side of Truth*

Students were given two extracts from *The Other side of Truth (Truth)*. After reading each extract, students were asked to respond to Likert scale questions to investigate the possible effects of reading these particular scenes.

Higher mean scores represent more agreement with the statement. Statements that show the affective dimension of the text, including the ones about the effects of the mother's death and the children's situation ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.42$ and $M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.40$, respectively) and being upset about them ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.33$) agreed with the high response rates. However, even though there was a positive correlation between the statements, "the children's situation made me upset" and "the children's situation affected me," the former statement was agreed with more than the latter one.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The mother's death affected me.	Male	104	2.88	1.457	.143
	Female	166	3.40	1.362	.106
The children's situation upset me.	Male	104	3.24	1.451	.142
	Female	165	3.82	1.216	.095
I wanted to help people who are in a similar situation.	Male	103	3.33	1.346	.133
	Female	161	3.65	1.315	.104
I wanted to read the book.	Male	104	2.62	1.483	.145
	Female	160	3.59	1.389	.110
I enjoyed reading this extract.	Male	103	2.75	1.447	.143
	Female	163	3.28	1.421	.111
These kinds of stories affect me.	Male	104	2.69	1.482	.145
	Female	160	3.43	1.435	.113
I would like to do something for them.	Male	103	3.17	1.458	.144
	Female	162	3.65	1.258	.099
I prefer fantasy fiction instead of this kind of realist fiction.	Male	104	2.83	1.484	.146
	Female	164	2.62	1.345	.105
The children's situation affected me.	Male	102	2.66	1.294	.128
	Female	163	3.33	1.409	.110
Sade's situation upset me.	Male	101	2.94	1.377	.137
	Female	163	3.37	1.310	.103
I thought about the value of the things that I own.	Male	100	3.18	1.438	.144
	Female	162	3.54	1.388	.109
I imagined myself in Sade's situation.	Male	101	2.84	1.468	.146
	Female	162	3.45	1.445	.114
I have met children who are similar to Sade and Femi.	Male	101	2.36	1.270	.126
	Female	160	2.78	1.364	.108
My view about people in real life has changed.	Male	101	2.77	1.256	.125
	Female	162	3.64	1.350	.106
My view about immigrant people has changed.	Male	101	2.91	1.234	.123
	Female	161	3.19	1.366	.108
Reading this kind of book helps us to understand immigrant people.	Male	101	2.97	1.292	.129
	Female	161	3.34	1.279	.101
I imagined myself as one of the characters in the book.	Male	100	2.97	1.352	.135
	Female	162	3.60	1.381	.108

Table 4. 4 The Effects of *The Other Side of Truth*

As to the empathetic dimension of the text, more than half of the participants imagined themselves in the characters' situation ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.39$) and thought about the value of the things that they own ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.41$). I also wanted to see whether they would want to take action for the characters they sympathize (by feeling pity for the characters) and empathize with them (by understanding and sharing Sade and Femi's feelings). The high agreement on the statements "I wanted to help people who are in a similar situation" ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.33$; 54.1% agree or strongly agree) and "I would like to do something for them" ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.35$; 54.1% agree or strongly agree) demonstrates that they not only had sympathy and empathy for the characters, but also they had the thought of helping them in some way. Therefore, in this survey, reading and knowing about refugee people made the readers understand their situation, and this brought participants a positive attitude towards refugees.

There was a positive correlation between gender and reading enjoyment after reading the extract from *Truth* ($r = .180$, $p < .001$); females had more positive attitudes towards the text. Also, there was a positive correlation between reading enjoyment of this story and having an empathetic and sympathetic identification with the characters ($r = .379$ and $r = .414$, $p < .001$). Even though they read this in a different context than their everyday reading practices outside school, the results showed that female readers enjoyed reading the extract more than male, and females were influenced by reading this more than their male peers were. As indicated in the previous sections, this more positive attitude of females was found not only towards reading this extract but also towards reading books in general.

I also wanted to see whether there was a relationship between the amount of fiction read in one year and the reactions towards the excerpt from *Truth*. After applying a simple regression, I found that the ones who read more fiction showed more agreement with the statements "I wanted to read *Truth*," "I enjoyed reading this excerpt," and "I wanted to help people who are in a similar situation" ($r = .000$, $p < .001$).

4.5.1.1 Discussion

In conclusion, given the responses to the statements about *Truth*, it can be claimed that reading an excerpt from a fictional text about a social issue (forced

immigration) had an effect on the majority of adolescent participants' thoughts, views, and feelings about this particular issue, and it encouraged them to take action towards the solution of this social problem. It is important to note that the city where these students lived has accepted more than 20,000 of the Syrian refugees who fled their country due to the life-threatening experiences in their home country (Cagaptay and Menekse, 2014). This immigration caused concerns about the interaction between local and immigrant people. There is a lack of employment opportunities in those regions where Syrian refugees moved to and therefore sociologists warn about the arousing resentment against refugees (Dinçer et al., 2013; Cagaptay and Menekse, 2014). Besides this, there are people from different cultures and ethnicities in the city, including Arab and Kurdish people, who have faced marginalisation by some groups and politicians in Turkey (as presented in Chapter 2). Therefore, as reader response research about picture books also suggests (Arizpe, 2009; Arizpe and McAdam, 2011), reading and talking about the problems of refugee people could be a way to develop understanding and tolerance between different groups.

4.5.2 Thoughts about Reading Experiences

“What do you think about the books you have read so far in your life?” was another question that investigated the reading attitudes of the participants (see Table 4.5). The purpose of this question was to find out readers' perspectives on “the books they have read so far” in order to find out possible reasons behind their current reading attitudes.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error
boring	Male	137	2.07	.637	.054
	Female	195	1.92	.480	.034
fun	Male	135	2.52	.721	.062
	Female	196	2.57	.679	.049
relaxing	Male	136	2.40	.829	.071
	Female	195	2.59	.900	.064
informative	Male	135	2.73	.924	.080
	Female	196	2.84	.813	.058
waste of time	Male	135	1.56	.740	.064
	Female	194	1.31	.496	.036
increased my desire to read	Male	136	2.38	.817	.070
	Female	196	2.67	.863	.062
affected my thoughts and feelings	Male	136	2.40	.872	.075
	Female	195	2.86	.865	.062
affected my character	Male	136	2.14	.904	.078
	Female	195	2.29	.932	.067
changed my view of life	Male	136	2.22	.940	.081
	Female	196	2.45	.873	.062
felt its effects for a long time	Male	137	2.08	.963	.082
	Female	193	2.40	.936	.067
had a negative effect on me	Male	134	1.31	.654	.056
	Female	193	1.23	.500	.036

Table 4. 5 Thoughts about Previous Books

To see the picture more clearly, the statements were divided into two categories, negative and positive. Negative statements were those where the books read so far were “boring,” “a waste of time,” and “had a negative effect on me.” More than two-thirds of the participants chose “none” or “a few” for these statements. 12% of the participants thought that a majority or all of the books they had read were boring while a total of only 3.3% participants thought “all” or “a majority” of the books “had a negative effect” on them, which was a similar rate to that of “waste of time,” with 3.9%.

On the other hand, there was a high agreement on the effects of fiction on their thoughts, feelings, views, and characters. Only 10% chose “none” for the statement “affected my thoughts and feelings,” and this rate was slightly higher for the statements “changed my view of life” (16.6%), “felt its effects for a long time” (22.7%), and “affected my character” (23%). This means that at least 4 out of 5 adolescent readers thought that they were influenced by the fictional books “they have read so far”, and this influence was as significant as the influence of changing their personality, views of life, thoughts, and feelings.

			affected my thoughts and feelings				Total
			none	a few	majority	all	
Gender	Male	Count	21	53	48	14	136
		% within Gender	15.4%	39.0%	35.3%	10.3%	100.0%
	Female	Count	12	52	82	49	195
		% within Gender	6.2%	26.7%	42.1%	25.1%	100.0%
Total	Count		33	105	130	63	331
	% within Gender		10.0%	31.7%	39.3%	19.0%	100.0%

Table 4. 6: A Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Effect

The correlations between the negative and positive statements revealed that the participants who thought the books they have read so far were boring also did not think that they were affected by the books they have read so far. Considering this relationship between reading pleasure and the effect of reading, according to responses, it could be said that pleasure was an important factor in the perceptions of the effects of fictional texts.

Looking at the gender differences, girls clearly had more positive attitudes than boys. According to the t-test results, a significantly higher percentage of male students than females found their previous reading boring and waste of time ($t(330) = .012$ and $t(327) = .000$, respectively; $p < 0.5$). On the other hand, female adolescents indicated significantly higher agreement than males on the

statements including “increased my desire to read,” “affected my thoughts and feelings,” and “changed my view of life” ($t(330) = .002$; $t(329) = .000$; $t(330) = .021$ respectively, all $ps < .005$).

4.5.2.1 Discussion

To sum up, Turkish adolescent readers appear to have been affected emotionally, personally, and intellectually by the fictional texts they have read. Given that 90% of the participants thought their views or emotions were affected by (a few of, a majority of, or all of) the texts they have read so far, the participants seemed likely to have had the idea that fiction had some sort of emotional and intellectual effects on them. These effects change according to their level of pleasure while reading the text. Those who took pleasure while reading indicated having a high level of positive influence from the text. What is more, there were a few participants that found reading fiction was “a waste of time,” while the majority found that reading contributed to their lives in various ways. Female readers had more positive views about their previous reading. Also, statistically more females than males thought that they were affected by the fictional texts they read.

4.5.3 Section Conclusion

In this section, the short-term and long-term effects of reading fiction have been presented. Firstly, participants revealed the short-term effects through their responses to an extract from *Truth*. Secondly, their thoughts about their previous reading showed the long-term effects.

The findings of both sections intersect at the idea that reading fiction had both long-term and short-term influences on these readers to varying degrees, depending on the readers’ enthusiasm and enjoyment of reading. Those readers who found the activity of reading boring did not like reading the extract either. They also thought that they were not influenced by the texts they read. A small number among these reluctant readers did not even respond to the questions about *Truth*. Finally, reading a short extract about the problems of refugee people affected the participants’ thoughts about refugees and they indicated their eagerness to help refugees if they had the chance to.

4.6 Popular Fiction

In this section, thoughts about popular books will be presented (Appendix 2, question 25). In Turkey, the concept of popular books includes both Turkish and Western books that sell the most, are prioritised at mainstream bookshops and are popular online bookstores. According to responses to agree-disagree questions, 1 out of 4 students found popular books' literary language is well-cultivated while half of the respondents did not agree with this statement. Moreover, about half of the respondents found that advertisements and publishers (43% and 48.2%, respectively) had an influence on popular books' popularity. In addition, although there was a high percentage of agreement (48.2% agreed) on the statement "popular books are read for fun," about a half of the respondents did not find popular books more fun than other books. Finally, 41.1% think that popular books attracted their attention more than other books did.

4.6.1 Discussion

It can be seen that, according to 1 out of 2 participants, although popular books were not more fun than other books, they became popular with the influence of publishers and advertisements. This result is consistent with previous research on popular books, which indicates that popular books, particularly bestsellers, become popular through the influence of external factors such as publishing and advertisement policies (Carare, 2012; Miller, 2000). This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 5, where participants' critical thoughts about bestsellers are analysed. Given the high percentage of disagreement on the statement "the literary language of popular books is well-cultivated," it could be said that the simple language of these books triggered the amount of reading of popular books.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	97	25.5	30.5	30.5
	Disagree	68	17.8	21.4	51.9
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	74	19.4	23.3	75.2
	Agree	46	12.1	14.5	89.6
	Strongly Agree	33	8.7	10.4	100.0
	Total	318	83.5	100.0	
Missing		63	16.5		
Total		381	100.0		

Table 4. 7 The Literary Language of Popular Books is Well-Cultivated.

4.7 The Space Where Adolescents Spend Their Time

This section demonstrates the usual free-time activities of teenagers and stresses the importance of the visual world in their life (Appendix 2, question 18).

	Gender	Total Numbe r	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Watching TV	Male	126	3.05	1.441	.128
	Female	189	2.83	1.483	.108
Using a computer	Male	124	3.35	1.786	.160
	Female	183	2.28	1.400	.104
Using a telephone	Male	125	3.83	1.693	.151
	Female	188	3.57	1.721	.126
Reading books	Male	126	2.68	1.275	.114
	Female	189	3.41	1.340	.097
Studying	Male	126	3.18	1.422	.127
	Female	183	3.74	1.332	.098
Working at home or somewhere else	Male	126	2.21	1.573	.140
	Female	184	1.99	1.367	.101

Table 4. 8 The Space Where Adolescents Spent Their Time

Among adolescents, the most common activity was using a telephone ($M = 3.67$), which was followed by studying ($M = 3.53$), reading books ($M = 3.13$), watching TV ($M = 2.94$), using a computer ($M = 2.72$), and working at home or somewhere else ($M = 2.07$). More than half of the participants indicated that they spend more than 2 hours using a telephone (the choices were 2-3 hours, 3-4 hours, and more than 4 hours) while this rate was less for other activities such as studying (49.5%), reading books (31%), watching TV (27%), and using a computer (26.4%). 10% of the adolescents did not usually spend time on reading, and 23% read books for less than one hour a day.

4.7.1 Discussion

Reading books significantly correlated with studying ($r = .442$), and working at home or somewhere else ($r = .176$) (all $ps < .001$). This result indicates that studying or working did not have a negative effect on the students' reading time. However, the negative correlations between watching TV and reading books ($r = -.120$, $p < .005$) and studying ($r = -.160$, $p < .001$) show that the students who spent more time on TV had less time for reading and studying.

Looking at gender differences, there were significant differences between genders in terms of the time spent on reading, studying, and using a computer. While only 17.5% of males stated that they read more than 2 hours per day (the choices were 2-3 hours, 3-4 hours and more than 4 hours) per day, this rate was 39.2% for females. Similarly, more than half of the females indicated that they studied more than two hours a day, but only about a third of males did the same. Conversely, 43.6% males used computers more than 2 hours a day whereas only 16.4% of females used computers at the same rate.

4.8 E-reading Habits

With the advancement of screen and online technologies, e-reading has become a part of people's daily reading practices. This section will present a general picture of these common practices in the city of Adana (Appendix 2, questions 19-22) .

47.9% of the respondents indicated they read e-books. Those who read e-books were asked some follow-up Likert scale questions. One of these statements was "I prefer reading e-books as they are cheaper and easier to access." 43.1%

students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, only 1 out of 5 e-book readers found reading e-books more fun than reading printed books, and 45.8% strongly disagreed with this statement. The statement “I prefer some e-books because no one knows what I am reading” had a similar response rate to the previous statement, with only 21% agreement. In addition to this, 63% disagreed with the statement “I think that e-books’ language and style is better than that of printed books.”

			E-book		Total
			Yes	No	
Gender	<u>Male</u>	Count	42	82	124
		% within Gender	33.9%	66.1%	100.0%
	<u>Female</u>	Count	107	80	187
		% within Gender	57.2%	42.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	149	162	311
		% within Gender	47.9%	52.1%	100.0%

Table 4. 9 Gender and E-Book Reading Habits Cross-Tabulation

Students were also asked the name of an e-book they had read and its author’s name if they could remember. Approximately one half of the e-book readers responded to this question. According to the responses, two types of e-books were read; one was print-based e-books and the other was online books¹³. 60.8% of students provided the name of online stories, which were books that were mostly written on Wattpad by young people, while 32% put print-based e-books, including world and Turkish classics as well as some contemporary books. I asked them to rate this e-book that they mentioned on a scale between 1 and 5, where

¹³ By print-based e-books, I mean e-books that were already printed on a paper by a publisher and then published as an e-book or distributed in electronic form as well, for example, e-book versions of *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*. I use the term “online books” for stories that do not have a printed version but are just shared on an online site. These stories are usually shared by young people and may be published after they are shared online and after becoming popular. An example would be *The Stranger (Yabancı)* by Öznur Yıldırım, which will be analysed in Chapter 7.

1 means “very bad” and 5 means “great.” Only 8.6% of the students did not like the book they named, but the majority liked it.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Online stories	59	15.5	65.5	65.5
Print based e-books	31	8.1	34.5	100.0
Total	90	23.6	100.0	
Missing	284	76.4		
Total	381	100.0		

Table 4. 10 Name of an E-Book that Participants Read

In terms of gender, 33.9% of male and 57.2% of female respondents indicated that they read e-books. Although the reading rate of female readers was higher than that of males, there was no significant difference in terms of attitudes towards reading e-books. The only notable difference was that almost two-thirds of male readers (65.2%) preferred to read print-based e-books while only 21.6% female students read these e-books; the majority of female students read only online books (74.3%). Later on in the interviews, it became evident that they read these books on Wattpad, an online reading-writing site. Turkish adolescents' online reading practices on Wattpad will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

4.8.1 Discussion

In general, the participants had a positive attitude towards e-books. However, slightly less than a half of them had had the chance to experience this type of reading. In addition, only 1 out of 4 participants could give a name of an e-book they had read. The reason for this contrary result may be related to the participants' opportunities to access e-books. Even though smartphones enabled access to e-books or online books, when we consider families who had to survive on minimum wage (as discussed in Chapter 2), the percentage of participants who owned a smartphone or could access the Internet is questionable. It can be concluded that, the financial situation of the participants had an effect on their e-reading habits.

4.9 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, adolescent readers' general attitudes towards reading, previous reading experiences, reading choices, and thoughts about the effects of fiction they have read so far have been presented from the quantitative findings of the study. While doing this, gender differences have also been considered. Correlations between the questions were taken into account to avoid misinterpretation. The other chapters will be built from the qualitative findings of the case study and the literature review about the reading background and reading interventions in Turkey.

In this chapter, it emerged that in the formation of reading attitudes of adolescent readers, a variety of factors had an effect, including parents, relatives, peers, teachers, role models, environment, the economy, book covers, the type of books offered to them, and the availability of a variety of leisure activities. There could be some other factors that affect adolescents' reading attitudes that were not investigated due to the limitations of the study. These might include the education system in Turkey, the economy, and the availability of libraries and books. Among the factors explored, peers, family, and relatives were the most influential on the participants' attitudes towards reading. The leisure opportunities that technological devices offer such as television, computers, and smartphones had a negative effect on the amount of reading the participants did.

It has also been found that adolescents' previous reading experiences had a significant influence on their future reading practices. Readers who did not like reading and did not read much (reluctant readers) did not have positive views about their childhood reading practices and they found the books they have read so far were mostly boring or not suitable for their level. A lack of good role models and the lack of parental encouragement also affected some reluctant readers negatively. On the other hand, moderate readers had more positive attitudes than reluctant readers towards reading books, to the books they had read previously, and to the excerpt from *Truth*. As expected, the most positive picture of reading background was drawn by avid readers.

As to the popularity of popular books, the effect of publishers and advertisements was recognised by the participants, and the majority did not find these books of good quality in terms of writing and style. Participants also valued reading e-books, but when compared to print books, the majority found reading print books more fun. They seemed to be doing e-reading on online sites more than in print-based e-books.

Lastly, the adolescent readers had different reading attitudes according to their gender. As the research presented in Chapter 2 also suggests, female adolescents read more than their male peers. In addition, they had more positive attitudes towards reading fiction than males, and therefore, statistically more female students than males thought that they had been influenced by the fiction they have read so far in various ways and degrees. Significantly more female readers than male readers did online reading. The next chapter will present findings that arose from interviews and readers' interactions with the books.

Chapter 5 Readers Encountering the Outside World in the Light of the Fictional World

The previous chapter investigated the reading choices of the group of Turkish adolescent readers from their response to the questionnaire. As indicated in section 4.9, in this chapter and in chapter 6 the data stems from the interviews and reading discussions. The data were in the Turkish language; I transcribed and translated the transcripts. This chapter will focus on the effects of reading fiction on their thoughts and daily life. It will begin by describing the choices the participants made and factors that affected these choices and end with a section on how those choices affected their meaning-making within daily life and for the future.

5.1 Consumer Culture/Bestsellers

Materialism and consumerism significantly affect 21st century life (Kasser, 2006), and buying and selling products of any type, including books, have turned into a commercial competition (Kasser and Tanner, 2004). Writing in 2003, Hade et al. (2003) argued that with the advancement of translation, publishing, advertising, and distribution, one product that is especially influenced by this consumer culture is children's books. Publications for children continue to be on the increase, according to Robert McCrum's recent article in the *Guardian* (2017). McCrum's article suggests that the number of children's books in print has risen in recent years, and children's book sales have taken approximately 25% of the entire market (2017).

The books that are consumed the most within this consumer culture tend to be "bestseller"¹⁴ books. The first bestseller list was generated in 1895 by the *Bookman* literary journal, followed by *Publishers Weekly* in 1913, and eventually the *New York Times* in 1942 (Carare, 2012). For this reason, America has been the leading country in the publication of bestseller lists, a fact that was also signalled by the participants. Today, it is possible to see different bestseller lists published/shared by various types of companies such as online sales sites and

¹⁴ A "bestseller" is defined as "a product that is extremely popular and has sold in very large numbers" in the Cambridge Online Dictionary (2017). However, for the purposes of this thesis, this term is used to refer to books that hit the bestseller lists in the US and Europe, in accordance with the meaning that the participants in this study gave to this term.

newspapers in different countries. One of the most well-known of these lists is the *New York Times* (NYT), which decided to publish a children's bestseller list after the publication of the fourth book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, because the first three books stayed at the top of the list for more than a year (Fitzsimmons, 2012). The reason for this is discussed in Miller (2000), where she supports Hade et al.'s (2003) research. She claims that bestseller lists "are powerful marketing tools that book professionals use to sell more books" (pp. 286-287), and the list is "more cultural than scientific," so these "statistically adjusted sale figures" do not reflect the reading rates in the US; rather, the lists show how these products became bestsellers within the culture (pp. 299-300).

5.1.1 The Politics of Bestsellers

According to Alan Sorensen's analysis of the effects of the NYT bestseller list on sales, the appearance of a book on the NYT bestseller list increases the sales of that book, especially for books by debut writers (2007). A similar result has been found by Octavian Carare (2012), who investigated the effect of rankings on the sales of apps. He concluded that the "public bestseller status of top ranked apps is a very important determinant of demand" (p. 735). Although his research refers to apps, it sheds light on how the public's view has an effect on the sale figures of certain products.

The idea of a consumer book culture was investigated in the reading sessions in this study. In one session, the discussion topic emerged from a quote from Katniss, the young female protagonist in *Hunger*: "I had expected someone flamboyant, someone older trying desperately to look young, someone who viewed me as a piece of meat to be prepared for a platter" (Collins, 2008, p.64). These are Katniss's expectations before meeting her stylist, Cinna, who will prepare her for the Games. As the discussion topic I set out was materialism and consumerism, this quote became a good example of how the human body is materialised and used within a culture that encourages consumption. The quote led the participants to discuss the various ways in which people have begun to consume materials faster. As the discussion progressed, the idea of a fast book-consuming culture also emerged:

Osman: Do you think this is the case for books, too?

Kdr: What you mean?

BookMonster: It could be.

Kdr: Definitely.

BoiceLove: For example, they prepare brochures a bit like that. They make it so attractive that, I mean, I always want to buy it; I want to go there and buy it.

Kdr: At the back of the books or on the front cover [there are] exaggerated reviews like “I started at 3.00 am and read it until morning” or “the book that is always on the bestseller list,” with their words or intense advertising made through social media, newspapers, or journals. [They all] show it.

Kdr and BoiceLove referred to the book industry by thinking about brochures and back cover endorsements as marketing tools that make the books more attractive and increase the consumer culture around certain books. Kdr, who does not read bestsellers, felt that the endorsements were not realistic and therefore he did not rely on these “presentation” tools that help the process of books becoming bestsellers, but some other participants considered the marketing when choosing books. Tess and Snowbird were in favour of bestsellers, finding them more “stylish” and “fluent.” Other contributing factors on sales that the readers mentioned were: “film adaptations” (Radley), “style,” and “plot” (Tess and Snowbird). Radley’s idea of adaptations was signalling some external factors affecting popularity that did not come from the books themselves while the other two readers pointed out the story elements, “style” and “plot” (Tess and Snowbird). From this, it appears that the participants’ attitude towards bestsellers depends on their reading interests.

Another criticism related to bestsellers was about the physical appearances of these books. As a reader of both classics and bestsellers, Radley criticised publishers for not being as attentive to classics as they were to bestsellers, and she linked the idea of the emptiness of a bestseller with the moral emptiness of the Capitol in *The Hunger Games*:

Radley: Bestsellers could be the Capitol, or there are books that are written in order to attract adolescents, but they have no meaning; they include nothing inside.

Osman: Do you say they are the Capitol?

Radley: I mean, they could be. They become a collection of papers presented on a plate rather than beef presented on a platter. How can I say it? The appearance comes into prominence again. An example could be John Green. The reason I think that is because I had read his other book called *Paper Towns*. It was beautiful for me. But I didn't find *The Fault in Our Stars* logical or beautiful. I read it but didn't think like that. How can I say it? It looked ridiculous. Ok. It was good, but I didn't find it as beautiful as everyone else did, where demand was so high it was made into a film.

The Capitol is a city where the wealthiest people live. The Hunger Games are organised and publicised for the people of the Capitol. These people value fashion and vanity. The term "the Capitol" also refers to the governor of the city (Collins, 2008). Radley seemed to be saying that even though this book has become extremely popular and sold in significant numbers by targeting adolescents, it is like the Capitol because it has "no meaning, nothing inside." Radley created her own evocative expression, "eyewash," to explain how bestsellers are presented attractively for readers, but with a meaning similar to "brainwash." Notably, while criticising *The Fault* for being "exaggerated" and an "eyewash," she presented another bestseller, *Paper Towns*, as an example of a good book. It seems that, even though she had a negative view towards books she considered bestsellers and therefore vacuous, she still read and enjoyed some of them.

BookMonster's complaint about a large number of bestsellers hints as to why Radley still chose to read bestsellers despite her criticism of some of them: "And for whatever reason, all books by American authors are bestsellers. How many bestsellers can there be?" Here, BookMonster indicated her disbelief about the authenticity in the sale figures of bestsellers because she had seen so many books described as bestsellers, particularly by "American authors." Kdr and BookMonster were criticizing the high number of books that were promoted as

bestsellers. As Fitzsimmons' previously mentioned 2012 research suggests, publishers have used the bestseller list for marketing purposes. Therefore, they created bestseller lists in different categories so that they could promote more books through including them in bestseller lists. The discussion revealed that the participants were aware not only of the financial aspects but also of the global monopoly within the list.

The comments above suggest that the participants had seen a great number of bestselling books. From their perspectives, although there were other books available for them to choose, these books were the ones that adult authorities such as media, political powers, and publishers featured. The matter of prioritising some books over others was the kind of "eyewash" that Radley discussed, meaning that the adolescent readers made their choices through their washed eyes. If what these readers suggested was the case, even though they had a variety of choices, their selection was limited by what was featured by book authorities. This does not mean that they did not have the chance to choose other books. However, they received more encouragement to choose bestsellers over other books. BookMonster pointed out the political reason for this: "They can make the one who fits their purpose famous [...] Homogenous people who read the same thing. This is what they want. Whoever are they?" (BookMonster, *Hunger*).

According to BookMonster, those bestseller books had similar characteristics, and the authorities behind this industry aimed to generate a community of readers that "read the same thing," and, as a result of this reading, become similar to each other. This idea overlaps with the research. For example, Hade et al. (2003) claim that the majority of the children's books in the market are "homogenized, synergized, commercialized texts" (p.143). The domination of powerful publishers, according to Hade et al. (2003), limits the availability of a wide range of choices for children. Kdr also agreed with the idea of purposefully created bestseller books that then influenced the choices of young readers:

Osman: Why are our authors not selling much over there [abroad]?

BookMonster: Why would they sell when they [Americans] have their own books?

Osman: I have seen an Orhan Pamuk book in Mexico.

BookMonster: There are Elif Shafak books too.

Kdr: I would like to add a little information, but it will be political: the meeting point of Orhan Pamuk¹⁵ and Elif Shafak¹⁶ is that they both accepted Armenian Genocide.

Osman: Do you think so?

Kdr: This a small point. It is not only the matter of the literary or rhetorical aspects; the purpose of the author or the purpose of the person who is using the work also affects this.

Here, Kdr and BookMonster were pointing to people “who use” books for their own benefits. This goes beyond the commercial aspects mentioned above; rather, they were talking about the political authorities who use books and authors to promote their own ideology. From his point of view, Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak are two authors who are “allowed” to sell in the West because of their ideological attitudes. It is, according to Kdr, also the reason for those authors’ being published and being popular in the Western world. These are ideas that relate to publishers and other powerful authorities that have an effect on sales figures. Adding to this, Radley also identified a contrasting influence that comes from readers:

Osman: What do you think affects this [a book’s popularity]?

Radley: I don’t know. People’s desire... And also the idea of fashion... For example, someone sees, there is such a book, she liked very much, let’s read it then. I mean, she reads it just to show off her reading. Eyewash, an exaggeration...

Here, Radley referred first to peer influence; she then highlighted that there are those who read popular books “just to show off” their reading of these (or any other popular) books. It was the “idea of fashion” that contributes to the sales

¹⁵ Orhan Pamuk won the Nobel Prize in 2006 for literature. He was charged by a Turkish court for his outspoken opinions about the Armenian Genocide and the situation of Kurdish people in Turkey (The Guardian, 2006).

¹⁶ Elif Shafak is an outspoken British-Turkish author who writes her books in both English and Turkish. She has been awarded the Chevalier des Arts and des Lettres (Penguin, 2017).

numbers of those books in Turkish society but not the quality of writing or any other textual parameters.

5.1.2 The Content of Bestsellers

In addition to the political power behind bestsellers, the participants criticised the content of these books. In Chapter 5 of *Hunger*, Katniss is naked and prepared for the Games, and her stylist, Cinna, examines her body (Collins, 2008, pp.61-72). Kdr found the detailed depictions in the chapter unnecessary:

Kdr: If this scene is very important, for example, I came across this kind of scene in *Ince Memed*¹⁷. I admired it. I cannot recall it now. It didn't tell the incident, but you understand that this kind of incident took place. I think, the last sentence was as such: "She turned into 'Mrs. Hatce.'" I mean, it does not tell you what happened explicitly, but gives the message he wants to give. Here, for example, he turned me around, touched me, and so on. These kinds of things are on the bestseller list or in the books that are targeted at us.

Osman: By "targeted at us" you mean...

Kdr: I mean through advertising.

BookMonster: Bestsellers, *New York Times*...

Osman: What do you think?

BookMonster: I mean not all the books I have read, but the majority of books that are written for youngsters include these kinds of scenes.

BoiceLove: Yes we come across that [in those books].

In the above quote, Kdr wanted to stress his discomfort with the depiction of a naked body by making an intertextual reference to *Ince Memed*, where a rape scene is narrated indirectly without explicitly depicting what happened. He directed his criticism not to the content in *Hunger*, but to the way it was depicted. According to him and other participants in the conversation, these kinds of explicit depiction of sex and violence were common characteristics of

¹⁷ A novel by the famous Turkish author, Yaşar Kemal published in 1955 and translated into English as *Memed, My Hawk*.

bestsellers and youth fiction that portrayed violence or sexual issues. As explained above, according to BookMonster, bestsellers were similar, which is due to the ideological attitude of the promoters of these books. MagicBookmark touched on another similarity between these books:

In my opinion, one of the reasons that make the popular books popular is that they all have a happy ending, and actually this is the thing people are seeking. Since, when we look at real-life stories, people are not happy all the time, but in popular books whatever happens, even if the man goes to Hell, he comes back to Paradise. They try to make people happy in this way. In fact, people need to seek hope, and they want to escape their daily routine.

MagicBookmark does not explain who she means by “they” whose purpose is to “make people happy,” but the idea is similar to what Kdr, BookMonster, and BoiceLove suggested about the power of books and the commonalities between them. For her, these stories with happy endings make people happy, and this is the reason people read these books. Her idea has long been discussed by scholars, and happy endings are accepted as important characteristics of the traditional structures of fairytales and children’s literature (Nikolajeva, 2003) that contain the message that moral characters are rewarded with a happy end, and immoral ones are punished with an unhappy end (Pape, 1992). Nikolajeva (2003) suggests that some modern children’s books have altered this structure, providing happiness at the end of the story, only this is not necessarily an end, but rather a new start. Although the books MagicBookmark referred to are youth literature, most of them still offer happy endings. In addition, she pointed to the desire to escape the routine of daily life as a reason for reading those books, which was one of the most popular reasons for reading fiction selected by participants in the questionnaire analysed in Chapter 4, in which 28% of the participants chose this option. From the content of bestsellers, they moved onto the Turkish context and discussed the question of why Turkish books did not sell much even if they had similar themes and why young people did not choose to read them as much as foreign books.

5.2 The Influence of the West on Readers

Western influence on Turkish literature and readers has a long history. It starts with the Westernisation reforms of the Ottomans in the nineteenth century and increased after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, as presented in Chapter 2. This effect of the West was strong on authors as well as readers (see, for example, Enginün, 2006; Moran, 1983; Turan, 1998; Uğur, 2010). Some of the participants such as Snowbird, Tess, and Radley stressed that Turkish authors were not as creative as Western ones, and therefore their books were not very attractive. In general, they found the books too simplistic regarding style, title, and plot:

Osman: *High School Days, Good Bye to High School Notebooks*. These are appealing to you I guess.

Radley: I don't think so.

Osman: There are Turkish books and foreign books here. What kind of differences have you noticed?

Radley: Turkish books are a bit simpler in the matter of murder and such.

Snowbird: Also they are not creative enough in finding names.

Tess: The books always have the same names.

Radley: Yes.

(3Words)

In the reading session, when a Turkish book for young people appeared on the screen, they did not show any excitement whereas when they saw Western youth fiction, they responded by saying the titles or indicating that they have not read that particular book yet. From these female readers' perspectives, the main problem was the lack of creativity in Turkish authors. Titles and plots were "simpler" than their Western counterparts. It was a fact, for them, that the books by contemporary Turkish authors were not very attractive. Subsequently, they started to disentangle the reasons for this:

Snowbird: Our killers are not creative enough to kill very skilfully.

Tess: That's also true.

Radley: Yes.

Snowbird: Always the same stabbing or money fight or whatever. What is that! But its [the book's] killers are very skilful. Ha ha.

Panther: Ok. But there shouldn't be killers like in real life.

Snowbird: Pardon! Many!

Tess: There are. There are so many.

Radley: Murders in Turkey are categorised as moral murders. Ha ha.

Isfendiyar: They are clean in general. It finishes with one bullet to the head.

Snowbird: Exactly.

Radley: Exactly, there is no need to investigate. Suddenly on a bus.

Tess: It is mostly a sudden result of a sudden incident.

Snowbird: Yes.

Tess: But it is not like this abroad. For example, an incident can have a long history.

Snowbird: Those men are puzzling their brains before committing a murder.

The first reason they came up with was the effect of real life. Because "our killers" were not "creative enough," it is expected that crime books would not be creative either. For them, someone could become a killer in Turkey following an argument on a bus and this would end "with one bullet to the head." These incidents are unlike Western ones where killers "are puzzling their brains before committing a murder." Panther wanted to differentiate between real life incidents and fictional ones; however, because Tess and Snowbird watch TV programs that present crime incidents in the Western world, they disagreed with

his idea. Their desire for “creativity” was visible in this discussion, describing a creative murder with the adjective “skillful”

The second reason for Turkish authors’ “unattractiveness” was the lack of value given to authors in Turkey. This idea appeared in the *Hunger* session as a result of my questions about books targeting young adults in Turkey in particular. They thought that there were only a few books that targeted young adults. Even books preferred by adolescents were not written for young people, but for adults in general. This was related to the lack of importance given to authors:

Tess: For example, there are people who give up their jobs to be an author. But this is not the case in Turkey. People think that you must have an additional job if you want to be an author [...]

Isfendiya: I mean, we have got so many books in Turkish, but their authors’ jobs are not writing. I mean, a man who is a director in the stock market is writing a book for you.

Osman: Yes.

Isfendiya: I mean, you do not take any pleasure from the book you are reading.

Tess: Also they try to write without mastering the subject. Just to earn money...

Snowbird: For that reason, we tend not to choose Turkish authors.
(*Hunger*)

They agreed that being an author is not the kind of job that helps to earn money. Therefore, from their point of view, Turkish authors need to do extra work rather than focusing only on writing their books. As a result of this, they believe that Turkish fiction has not developed in the right direction and they did not take any “pleasure” from reading books by Turkish authors, who also all write “in the same style” (Snowbird). Although this was also the case for “foreign authors, who have got many books, but they can change something, they can make unpredictable endings” (Tess, *Hunger*). There were visible Western influences on the reading lives of some of the participants, especially on Tess

and Snowbird. However, there was one aspect of those appealing books that they did not like: the high price. This will be the subject of the following section.

5.3 The Economy of Bestsellers and Pirated Books

Bestselling books sell well in Turkey and attract the participants' attention as well. However, the problem with these books is that the participants thought that it is not easy to access them as they are sold at high prices. As a result of this cost, according to some participants, "pirated books" appeared and are preferred by people who cannot afford the original publications. Although it is illegal to sell these books, they are available on the streets of Adana at a very low price. Snowbird did not like pirated books because she thought they ignore the publishing and authorial rights: "Every book has got a value and a soul. But pirated books are sold without any value. I don't know, maybe because they [the publishers of pirated books] see them as inanimate objects" (Snowbird).

The use of the word "objects" suggests opposition to the idea of producing and selling books just for money, like any other materials that are used in daily life. From her perspective, books have a "soul," and therefore they should not be published for the sole purpose of making money as this has a negative effect on their real "value." Before Snowbird went on to talk about authorial and publishing rights, Tess responded to her:

You are right, but when you look at booksellers, it is too much for us to give 30-40 lira for a book. You don't want to buy it. Even though my father is a bookseller, I am not against pirated books because they push you to buy them. For example, middle-class families can buy ten books in one month, but if they buy pirated books, this number could be 20-30 since the book you pay 20 liras for at a bookseller can be found for five liras. (*Hunger*)

Tess, again, complained about the high price of the books, which for her was "the main reason" for pirated books. From her point of view, if pirated books "disappeared," low-income people "would not read at all." Her argument was supported by Snowbird, who added that books are "expensive," pointing to the importance of the "accessibility" of books for everyone, the lack of which "leads to the underdevelopment of the country." After their comments, Isfendiyar

wanted to illustrate Snowbird's idea with an example: "I observe many children in my parents' village who are limited like this. I mean, before children even start [reading books], their parents prevent them from accessing books" (*Hunger*).

Although Isfendiyar used the word "prevent," according to his expressions that he used in what follows, neither Isfendiyar nor the other participants blamed parents for not providing their children with books because they understood that if parents are only earning "800-900 Turkish liras" (Isfendiyar), they will not be able to spend money on books. Aslan's (2015) research supports their perception about parental income and the affordability of books. Considering the families who have to live on the minimum wage (which in 2016 was 1,300 Turkish lira, or approximately £345) and children who have to work to support their families, it is unlikely that these people would be able to buy and read books with high prices (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2016; wageindicator.org, 2016).

5.4 Who Makes the Choice?

In the previous section, participants' responses about the economic aspect of bestsellers and its effect on the reading habits of adolescent readers have been analysed. This section will draw a picture of community influences and the physical features of a book on reading choices.

5.4.1 The Deterrent of Enforcement or the Attraction of Excitement?

The community in which a reader lives affects the reading attitudes and choices of young people. In what follows, "community" is understood as a group of "people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group or nationality" (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2017). The participants mentioned teachers, friends, and family members as the community members who most affect their reading choices. This result corresponds to previous research on reading choices in other countries, for example, in England (Clark and Foster, 2005; Hopper, 2005) and West Australia (Merga, 2014a and b; Merga and Moon, 2016).

Some educators have long maintained that readers should have the freedom to choose what and how they want to read. As Rosenblatt argues, this is because

the real “literary experience” starts with a reader’s direct and independent personal response to the literary text. The literary text will begin to come alive for readers when they read out of their own desire and interest, and they will connect it to their own experiences without others’ influences (Sipe, 2008). It was obvious in the responses that the participants do not want to be directed when they choose or read a text, especially by an adult power holder. However, they happily chose to read a book when their peers shared their excitement after reading it. Hopper’s (2005) findings suggest that young adult readers are influenced by their peers more than by adults. She bases this on the “gap in expectations between adolescents and their elders” and the “peer-group culture” (p.118). With the development of e-technologies and young people’s exposure to them, this gap and its influence have become more visible (as will be discussed in Chapter 7). Young people can follow the pace of new social media and online reading sites while the older generation is usually less active on these sites. Although it is not a new issue (see, for example, Thomson, 1987), this generation gap has become increasingly problematic in the classroom when teachers force students to read what teachers are familiar with rather than new publications.

In general, the participants of this study were not very happy with the suggestions from their teachers. For example, when MagicBookmark was in primary school, her teacher would ask them to read books and write reading logs for the books they read. However, MagicBookmark never wrote one. She did not like reading until her 5th year of primary school. In contrast, for BookMonster, teachers had been milestones in the development of her reading habit:

My primary school teacher bought sets of books in the style of Muzaffer İnci. I started reading during that time... She would ask us to read books regularly, not only me but the whole class. Then she would make exams about them. For this reason, I read a lot in my first four years even if it was compulsory. My Turkish teacher gave a talk about the importance of reading books when I was in the 6th grade; I read a lot since then.

(BookMonster, interview)

In this case, the set of books provided by the teacher and the compulsory reading made a positive impact on BookMonster’s reading. The Turkish language teacher’s talk also became memorable for her, and she believed she read a lot

as a result. She did not say whether she liked the books in that particular set or not, but it was a starting point for her. As she read, she started to choose a different type of book, usually fantasy.

Family members were other figures that were often involved in the reading choices of the young readers. As with the teachers, when family members started to force these young readers, they did not want to read what they were offered:

Tess: They [adults] try to direct you in the direction of their own will. My mother does this.

Osman: What do you think about this?

Tess: I definitely object to this because I think that if a person reads books that she likes, she can develop herself and her love of books increases. I read books that I did not like. You even give up reading books after a while. I mean, I do not like obligations. But if someone suggests I read a book, I mean, just a suggestion, then I may read that book. But if they say read this one instead of the one I am reading, then I do not do it (*Ship*)

It seems that Tess wanted adults to respect her reading choices; otherwise, she did not accept their suggestions. In addition, when an adult wanted to suggest books to her, this had to be in a way that she did not feel it is an obligation or enforcement. BookMonster had an experience similar to Tess's. In her case, one of her grandmothers did not like her choices:

Osman: Do you think you make the right choices?

BookMonster: From my point of view yes; according to my grandmother, no. My grandmother wants me to read literature; I mean, real things instead of this kind of book [fantasy], because I cannot put these books down. I mean, sometimes I read until morning. For this reason, I argue with my father. My light stays on, and of course he sees this and pops up, says: "Sleep!"

Osman: Is he against of this kind of book?

BookMonster: No, he is not against them; he likes reading them but in moderation.

Osman: Hmm.

BookMonster: But it is serial fiction; you don't want to leave it and keep wondering what is going to happen next.

Her grandmother had a significant effect on BookMonster's reading habits, frequently reading books with her when she was a child. However, as she grew up, BookMonster developed her own reading taste and started to choose books that her grandmother did not like. These were usually popular fantasy fiction that she finished overnight. Here, one of the reasons for her grandmother's objections to BookMonster's choices was that she did not "want to put them down" and she continued to read when she was supposed to sleep; for her father, this meant she was reading beyond the standard of reading "in moderation." Similarly, MagicBookmark's mother did not want her to read during the night, but she was able to escape her criticism by buying special reading glasses that allowed her to read under her blanket without anyone noticing her. The adult concern about the non-stop reading may be related to Tess's mother's view on the negative influence of reading too much crime as in both cases the parents suggest reading "in moderation." Tess took a break from her crime reading while BookMonster continued to read what she liked. In Tess's case, the limitation of her choices by her mother influenced her reading as she did not want to read more for a while. However, BookMonster and MagicBookmark subverted their family members' suggestions through reading what and when they wanted to read. In these examples, family members wanted to direct these young readers, particularly when they had concerns about their reading choices and habits.

On the other hand, when the children and adolescents did not read, family members tried to find ways of encouraging them to do so. When they suggested books in certain ways, it made a positive impact on their reading.

MagicBookmark started reading books upon receiving a book gift from her uncle, which was *Heart* by Edmondo De Amicis. He had intended to buy a doll as a gift, but when her mother told him that MagicBookmark did not read and about her teacher's complaint, he bought the book. He added, when giving her the book: "Read this book before my next visit as I will ask you about it." Because of the

“soft spot in [her] heart for [her] uncle,” she read the book just before his next visit. Her memories of this reading were still fresh:

I said ok. Then I lost the book... The next visit was about six months later, in summer. My mother asked “Have you read the book? Your uncle is coming.” “What book?” I asked. “*Heart*” [she said], then I recalled it. I searched through the house to find it, and I did. See, I will read this, I said. I went to bed. I read three, four pages; then I got bored, and I walked around the house. Then I came back; I was unable to read it... I was in a fix... Eventually, I came across a story in the book; their teacher was telling a story. I read it. It was 10-15 pages. Then I couldn’t put it down. I finished the book in that day. My uncle didn’t ask me about the book. I didn’t say that I had read it either. But afterwards I started reading books; I started reading a lot...

Here, the book was chosen by her uncle and there was some encouragement for reading in that she was fond of him; this affected her struggle with reading the book. Even though it was difficult to start the book, once she’d had a taste of it, she finished it straight away because she liked it.

If MagicBookmark’s case is analysed in more depth, the process of how she became a reader can be seen. The following reading story should summarise the situation: A child in 5th grade who does not read books receives a book as a gift from a person she liked (her uncle); she struggles to read at first, but after reading a part of the story, she becomes a book lover and reads books a lot. The way she received the book (gift) led her to welcome the suggestion. Also, the person who provided the book had another positive impact on her positive attitude towards reading the book. However, in another case, the same child refused the suggestion from another adult: her teacher. The story was different in that case; the same child who did not read books was given homework by a person she liked (her teacher) to read books and write reading logs, but she did nothing and for this reason, received teacher’s criticism. In both stories, adults were trying to make the child read. However, their roles (uncle and teacher) and the tools they used (a gift and suggestion; a homework and enforcement) were different. In addition, in the latter case, the action took place in a formal setting (in school) while in the former one, it was at home. More factors could have affected the ends of these stories, but apparently, the main elements that

affected the reading attitudes of the participants are related to the way they were asked to read books. It would be an incorrect conclusion to say that the uncle and the teacher are the main factors in her responses in the two cases. In head teacher Eric's case presented in Chapter 1, for example, family members caused him to hate books through forcing him to read "books with political terms."

MagicBookmark did not read the books she was asked to read by her teacher. As Tess indicated, if it was not "just a suggestion," if it was beyond that, it had a negative result. It seems clear that these readers liked deciding on books through their own free will and under no pressure. When books were suggested to them, this had to be done in a friendly manner, without any sense of enforcement. Otherwise, they refused the recommendation.

On the other hand, sometimes it was the adolescents who encouraged their parents or other family members to read. In particular, books that they discussed in the reading sessions were read and discussed at home with the other family members: "In my opinion, he alluded to [political matters]. I would say children wouldn't read this. For example, my mother bought it to read too" (BookMonster, *Prince*). What BookMonster shared about *Prince* is unknown. However, for some reason, her mother wanted to read the book. Another example of this kind of influence from young people to adult took place during the pilot study when one of the participants, M, an avid male reader, took *Hugo Cabret* home, and his brother (7 years old) wanted to read the book with him. Then his mother and older brother joined them, and they all read the book together and discussed it. M said that his little brother was able to understand the text through the pictures. He noticed small details in the illustrations and asked questions about them. Notably, neither BookMonster nor M had asked their mothers to read the books. However, the adolescents' excitement and the things that they shared about the books led to their mothers to become curious about the books and read them. These two events suggest that the promotion of books and reading is more likely to have a positive outcome when the suggestion is made with an excitement that arouses other people's curiosity.

In this section, the influence of community members such as teachers and family members on the reading choices and attitudes of the participants has been analysed. According to the responses, the strength of the influence depended

more on the way the suggestion was made than on who made the suggestion. When the participants were obliged to read certain books, they tended to have a negative attitude towards this obligation, even in their childhood years, whereas when they were encouraged to read in an appealing way such as receiving books as gifts or someone sharing the excitement of reading a book, they wanted to read those books, which led to the development of a positive attitude towards reading. The next section is about how the physical features of a book affect their perspectives on reading.

5.4.2 Effects of the Paratext and the Text Itself

In addition to the commercial aspects and adult suggestions presented so far, paratextual and textual features are other factors that affected the participants' reading choices. When we were reading and discussing *Fault*, the discussion turned to the attractiveness of the book's visual characteristics:

Panther: There are comments here [showing back cover] attracting my attention.

Radley: Oh! When I go to buy books, I usually have something in my mind. Otherwise, for example, I buy from a second-hand bookseller; the uncle there always suggests something for me. They are all beautiful books!

Tess: I usually consider the font, too.

Radley: Some font styles are uh, I mean, you don't want to read.

Tess: Very tiny.

Radley: Yes.

Panther: Like an encyclopaedia, so little.

Radley: I don't want to read them even if they're nice ones.

Panther mentioned the comments and endorsements on the back covers of books. For him, these marketing tools were also important, helping him to decide whether a book was worth reading or not. Likewise, Radley, Tess, and Snowbird looked at online reviews about the book they intended to buy. For them, comments by other readers gave some clues about the book. They also valued

their friends' suggestions and views about books when making a choice. The font also seemed to be a crucial factor in these young readers' choices; if it was too small or they did not like it, they may be put off reading that book. Radley expanded on this view while discussing the reason for the popularity of bestsellers:

We can give an example from the books. In *The Fault in Our Stars*, the cover is different and it has got binding. Even if you remove the outer cover, it looks beautiful. The book is delicate and not heavy and even its pages are beautiful. I mean, it has got a very attractive shape and font, which is large.

In this quote, she was directing her criticism at publishers who generate popular books by including attractive physical features such as covers, binding, paper quality, and typography. While she was talking about these factors, she suddenly laughed and started to talk about the classics she had in her library. These "meaningful" books were "very thin, their pages were thin, and they were written in very small letters," and therefore they did not "attract [her] attention in any way." She did not mention the reason for this, but she thought the "other books were published well on purpose," but classics were not. Apparently, she did not find popular books as "meaningful" as classics, but she did not want to read classics because of the unattractive physical features (Radley, *Hunger*). From her point of view, the attractive physical details of popular books were reflected in the price, which was another aspect of this consumerist book culture that was criticized by the participants, as discussed in Section 5.2.

As well as referring to the effect of paratextual features, the readers mentioned their choices were affected by the pull of the text itself. Some readers even made their decision based on reading a random page, for example, Radley and Panther. Panther: "Also, I open a page from inside..." Radley: "Exactly, any page..." Panther: "I read it as if it is dragging me away..."

However, the actual act of reading was also a big influence on choice: if this experience was positive, it opened the doors to a new genre or author, and they continued reading books from that genre or author. BookMonster began to read fantasy books after reading *Twilight*. She continued reading fantasy fiction until

she became “more mature” (*Snowbird*). Similarly, Tess’s milestone for her crime “addiction” was reading a Tess Gerritsen book. Therefore, in addition to “pre-reading” factors that affected choice, the taste of a new book could also shape future reading.

In short, the participants considered different aspects of books when choosing them. As well as the physical features such as font, style, shape, and book cover, their choices were influenced by book endorsements, reviews, and advertisements, including word of mouth. They seemed to agree on the idea that physical features of bestsellers were more attractive than other books, and this was pushing them to read bestselling books rather than others. While the discussion so far has been about the choice-making process and the agents involved in this process as well as about the act of reading a particular text, the next section will focus on the “after-reading” experiences that illustrate the traces of fiction on the readers.

5.5 Readers Encountering Fiction

Having identified some of the factors that shaped the readers’ books selection, in this section, the focus will be on how they respond to those books they chose to read and how reading one book can contribute to their understanding of another book. In addition, they sometimes linked books to other media. These factors indicate the influence that the encounter with fiction has on these readers’ reading lives.

5.5.1 Intertextuality

For the purposes of this thesis, intertextuality is understood as “references by a (literary) text either to individual other texts or to literary (sub)systems” (Rajewsky, 2005, p.54). The participants referred to their previous reading when explaining the texts they read during the study. These intertextual responses can be presented in three categories according to Sipe (2008), which are “associative links, analytical links, and synthesising links” (p.131). When a story or a part of a story reminds readers of another story, this is called an associative link. If the reader starts comparing the stories by making an analysis, he also makes analytical links. Finally, if the reader reaches some conclusions from what she read and links this reading to previous one, this is called a synthesising link

(p.136). Sipe does not limit these links only to between two written texts, but he considers other types of links between different media in this category.

The participants showed examples of the three kinds of links during the reading sessions. The connections they made were sometimes associated with an idea presented in a text and sometimes with the plot. In the *Fault* discussions, Snowbird's stress on the idea that no one thinks that they might be killed by someone reminded Radley of another piece of fiction she read before:

Oh, yes! Killing, being killed, and suicide. Which book was it? I think it was in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. It found it meaningless to see suicide as weird. It is the same here. It never crosses one's mind that one might be killed by someone.

It is not easy to evaluate what kind of influences the book had in her mind. However, as Panther rightly pointed out: "... you never know when, but one day you just pick a quote up from one of the books you read, and you use it" (interview). Even if Radley could not recall what the quote was exactly, the quote remained in her mind and she suddenly recalled it. As discussed in Section 2.2.2, the idea of suicide depicted in the classic eighteenth century romantic novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1774) affected the readers of this book in the eighteenth century. Radley seems to be one of those readers who were influenced by the idea.

The quote in Radley's memory stressed the idea that suicide is a conventional thing and it should be accepted as normal in society, which brings an important question to the agenda: How, if at all, did reading this extract affect her perception of self-murder? Considering the studies mentioned in the literature review and the nature of the quote she recalled, it can be argued that she has been influenced by the text about her perspective on suicide. Although Young Werther's age is not revealed in the story, given that both the reader and the protagonist are young and in love, this might be another reason for her interest in the idea (Schmidtke and Häfner, 1988).

Radley's quote was just one example among many other intertextual references the participants mentioned as they discussed the books. These references included books that they read a relatively long time ago. The intertextual

references they made included recognising another text, making comparisons, and reaching some conclusions from the comparisons, which requires a good level of understanding of both texts and which Sipe (2008) describes as a synthesising link.

5.5.2 Intermediality

Intermediality is a term that has been used broadly with different meanings in research. In this thesis, however, it specifically refers to a narrower meaning of “intermedial references” defined by Rajewsky (2005) and covering the aspect of relating a work produced in one media (text) to another work categorised in another medium such as theatre, film, or music. In the *Sinner* session, Tess and Snowbird were the most excited participants, who always wanted to express their thoughts and feelings. While talking about the effects of reading too much crime fiction, they referred to the news:

Tess: [...] It doesn't seem like exaggeration to me when someone dies or is killed. You may be upset, but not too much.

Snowbird: It starts to attract your attention.

Tess: How did this happen, something like that?

Snowbird: You switch to that channel when you see murder.

Tess: If there is murder, you turn to it and watch.

Snowbird: Yes.

Tess: I mean, I don't watch news normally because it makes me upset. But when there is murder, I suddenly stop there.

Tess wanted to show the effect of reading crime books and gave examples from her life. In the first example, she tried to establish how reading bloody scenes such as murder and naturalistic depictions of murdered people (e.g., the details of the murder weapon and its effects on the victim) affected her perspective about murder. From her point of view, hearing news about a person who was murdered looked like an ordinary incident because she read about and imagined these kinds of incidents in the crime books she had been reading since her middle school years.

For both crime readers (Tess and Snowbird), watching murder stories on TV was also exciting, and after reading crime fiction, murder started to attract their attention. Notably, when explaining their feelings about watching or hearing murder news, Snowbird and Tess used words that demonstrate curiosity rather than grief. Tess indicated that she asked “how could something like this happen?” Although many people might ask this question when they hear about a murder, Tess was calm and focused on the details of the incident. Her attitude towards murder scenes shows how she perceives murder incidents. It is important to note that she and Snowbird did not use words related to fear or sadness, but instead used words to indicate curiosity. In another conversation, they both indicated that reading crime fiction makes people “more cold-blooded.” Also, Tess thought that the reason for her not watching news was because ‘it makes her upset’, but murder news was an exception to this. Her claim, however, contradicts with the research findings that watching news has negative effects on the audience (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000; Szabo and Hopkinson, 2007), and crime news is one of those types of news that causes psychological problems (Klite et al., 1997). Whether it was really an effect of reading crime fiction or not, both Tess and Snowbird were excited to talk about murder and made a connection with television while explaining this.

Intermedial connections were also made between television and books during a conversation between Panther and Isfendiyar in which they also discussed the topic of death. In the following extract, Panther was referring to books he read and Isfendiyar was recalling a quote from a Turkish TV series, *Kurtlar Vadisi* (*Valley of the Wolves*). For them, both the TV series and the books they read acted as the two pieces of evidence that they relied on when making a judgement about the acceptability of a particular idea or claim.

Panther: In the books I read so far, I have never seen such an expression; I found the opposite, that living requires more courage than dying...

Isfendiyar: As a generation who grew up with *Kurtlar Vadisi* [laughter], it is [an] unfavourable [idea] for us. You all know that saying.

Osman: How was it?

Isfendiyar: What is that? “You are saying death, death, my dear, I chose to live for you!”

Osman: Yes, yes.

Isfendiyar: After hearing that, it looks so weird to us [to perceive committing suicide as courage] (*Heroin*)

If Isfendiyar’s expression is examined in depth, it reveals something about the background of this claim. He started the sentence with “as a generation who grew up with *Kurtlar Vadisi*.” Of course, the simulative experience of the narrative is not the same as a real-life experience (Oatley, 1999a), however, he used the word “generation” because it was not only Isfendiyar but also many other children in Turkey who grew up with *Kurtlar Vadisi*, which has been broadcasting in Turkey and some other countries since 2003 and is very popular among young people and even children (Çiftçi, 2006).

According to Kaya and Tuna’s (2008) study, which investigated the effects of TV series on the socialisation of primary and middle school students, *Kurtlar Vadisi* was one of the most watched TV series, especially among boys. The study investigated 650 students, and 23.1% put the name of the main actor, Necati Şaşmaz, as the person they wanted to take as a role model. Almost a half of the male participants put his name as their idol (179). Kaya and Tuna (2008) reached the conclusion that watching this show could affect the socialisation of young people due to the violent scenes it contains. This idea was supported by Taş and Yalçınkaya’s 2015 study where, according to high school teachers, watching TV series in Turkey had negative effects on the high school students’ behaviour. This does not mean that Isfendiyar was affected negatively, but it supports the influence that the show had on this generation, and it shows that for both for Panther and Isfendiyar, the narrative of the series helped them to interpret and criticize the books they read.

Intermediality was also present through the more fluid connections the participants made between literature and other modes of expression and which sometimes affect their lives. Radley provided an example of how she found a connection to the fictional life of characters through the reference to a real-life person, a singer in *Brother*: “Also a melody... There is a mention of a name, a

singer. I started listening to his songs.” She had seen this singer’s name in the book and searched for him on the Internet, an action that led to this singer and his songs becoming part of her life. Thus, reading fiction fostered her curiosity, sparking an action that resulted in learning, the adoption of a new form of text, and a new practice in her life.

The above examples show how readers made intermedial references from TV serial to book, book to music, book to Internet, and vice versa as well as how they used fictional elements as evidence for their ideas. In addition to intertextual and intermedial links, the participants made links between reality and fiction, which will be investigated in the next section.

5.5.3 Reality and Fiction

The research presented in Chapter 2 suggests that there is a strong relationship between reality and fiction and the readers’ perception of reality that emerges from the fiction (see e.g., Djikic et al., 2009; Kaufman and Libby, 2012). As in the case of other research on readers’ responses to fiction (Thomson, 1987), this group of adolescents frequently attempted to relate the story to real life through linking the story’s events and characters to their own life experiences, to people they knew, or to their emotions and beliefs. This section provides examples that show this type of response is a significant part of their reading.

5.5.3.1 Fictional Experiences and Real Life

During our reading of *Prince*, everyone in the group was laughing at the lamplighter who follows “orders.” He lights the streets in the night and puts out his lamp in the morning. He never gives up this job because “orders are orders” (de Saint-Exupéry, 1998, p.45) even though his planet is unique because “it was blest every day with 1,440 sunsets” (p.46). The reading led to talk about the kinds of rules that their school principal reminded them of every week, something which made them all laugh. Leonardo’s response was worth noting;

[...] I forgot my phone’s USB cable in my bag; the principal took it and “you cannot bring this here according to the regulations” he said. I asked: “Can I see the order?” He replied: “Anyway you can pick it up on Friday.” Ha ha ha. There is no such thing, no paper, but he is providing discipline in this way. [He is a] king, king! (*Prince*).

Here, reading this scene helped them to look at real-life matters from a different angle. School rules annoy Leonardo, and he explained in detail why he gets annoyed with them. His peers supported him with their laughter and comments. Although his experience with the principal was not particularly humorous, it turned into a funny story that created a moment of fun with his peers because of the way in which he told it and related it to the orders given by the King to the lamplighter. This subverted the principal's orders, turning them into nonsense. As opposed to the other reading sessions, none of the students had read this scene beforehand, and none of them had read the book before. Thus, Leonardo's expression was an immediate response to his reading and his story changed their perception of an everyday matter and created a common bond of fun and friendship.

Similarly, when reading *Brother*, Radley became curious about the illness of the protagonist, and she explained to the other participants how the illness was described in medical terms. When the participants were talking about the effect of *Brother* on Radley, Snowbird said: "In my opinion, even your curiosity and research about that man's illness is an effect" (*Brother*). "Running to the Internet" was something that Snowbird said she would do when she "faced new things in a book" (*Brother*). Both Radley and Snowbird seemed to be keen on learning the facts about the fictional incidents even though they knew fiction does not always tell the truth. However, Radley used a search tool and then looked for the "authenticity of information" given in the book. Reading about a particular idea in fiction directed this person to another media source where she expected to find facts about the idea. This also shows that she did not perceive the things presented in the book as facts, but as something that might be related to facts.

Similarities between experiences and emotions in fictional life and real life enabled readers to connect and look at them from a different perspective. Even when they were talking about an unpleasant experience, they were sometimes able to make jokes about it depending on how the mood had changed after reading a story.

5.5.3.2 Relating the Story to Emotions and Beliefs

On some occasions, the participants made strong emotional connections with the story events or characters. For instance, MagicBookmark often tried to explain the story incidents by referring to another fictional incident or idea. She stressed the importance of “struggle” in life in different reading sessions. Although this word and her explanations were not a direct quote from a fictional text, they had links to the fictional stories she had read. In the *Ship* readings, for example, she criticised the Child for his choice of an “easy way:”

To make your life important depends on you. [...] If this child had grown up and did not become a fish or did not try to become a fish, he would come to a certain level to achieve his goal. It is related with trying to continue in your way. [...]

The child character in the book chose “to become a fish” to find his father, who was travelling somewhere in a white ship. This was an “easy way” because, from MagicBookmark’s point of view, the child may have been able to find his father if he had been able to stand against the difficulties he faced and then he would have been able to grow up and find his father. However, his way of finding the father was unrealistic because he would not be able to become a fish. Therefore, his choice was an “easy way,” through which he did not succeed. She related this with fear as if the child could not dare to face the reality that he would not be able to become a fish. Then she tried to explain her understanding of fear by making phrases with words starting with K, O, R, K, and U (*korku*-fear). She gave two different meanings of fear. One was, “If you come across places that you may be caught, run.” The second one was, “Be determined; wealth belongs to those who care about their destiny.” She thought the child was not brave enough as he chose the first way. He did not dare to fight. I asked where she learned about these definitions of fear. The following conversation took place:

MagicBookmark: It relies on the Alcoholics Anonymous groups... I mean, they are people who are trying to give up alcohol. They do not have a name. They have got an ideal. If you come across a place that contains alcohol, run and escape.

Osman: Is this from a story?

MagicBookmark: No. They are real. Its other explanation is being determined; wealth belongs to those who care about their destiny. This is used for those who can give up alcohol. These are superior people. People who fit the second definition are great people. Courage is this. Many people would choose the easy way. You are alone; your granddad has gone. What would you do?

MagicBookmark stated that she had not been involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, but somehow she had become an advocate of their slogan. Several times she related story events to being brave. She suggested that only people who are brave or who choose the path of “courage” can become “great people.” Others are just “ordinary people.” She mentioned in the discussions that she played the game of truth or dare with her friends. This is a game in which players have the choice of answering a difficult or personal question truthfully or doing a dare. She was also a reader of *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. Her stress on the importance of choosing bravery and fighting over fear echo the characteristics of one of the factions, Dauntless, that was chosen by the protagonist of the novel, Tris (Roth, 2013). Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that her emphasis on courage has emerged from her reading or her games, it does suggest that these practices had an influence on her ideas and beliefs about fear and bravery and, as in the case of the examples in the section above, the fiction she encountered had broadened her perspectives about everyday events.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

The data presented and analysed in this chapter helps us understand some of the ways in which reading fiction affects readers. The original research question that motivated this thesis was explored with a particular group of readers in a particular context; however, the findings point to several key factors. Firstly, the participants were not passive receivers of fiction, but active participants in the meaning-making and selection process. They showed their awareness of the idea that their choices were limited by what was offered to them or by what was made attractive for them through advertisements, sales figures, and paratextual elements. They also raised their concerns about the accuracy of sales figures. They did not like reading those books “imposed” by any sort of authority figures. Instead, some participants (especially the male readers) preferred to read books

that were not prioritised by the mass media. On the other hand, some readers of these prioritised books acknowledged the “flow, the quality of style, and language” of these books and indicated the ways in which they were more “attractive” than other books.

Secondly, the social community of the readers such as their teachers, parents, and friends affected their reading attitudes and choices depending on the way they promoted reading. Forcing these young readers to read certain texts resulted in negative reactions while the promotion of reading and books in an attractive way such as gifts and encouragement added to their reading development. Nevertheless, even if they were limited by what was promoted by authorities and by what they were allowed by the community to read, they were still able to make the choice through their encounter with fiction, enabling them to become critical of what they read and create their own reading tastes despite other barriers presented above. In their encounter, they made intertextual, intermedial, and real-life links with the texts they read. This section acts as a bridge between this chapter and the next, where the focus will move from the participants’ connections with their outer world to the connections with their inner world.

Chapter 6 Echoes of Fiction in the Inner World of the Reader

This chapter focuses on how readers deepen their understanding of their inner worlds through reading and discussing fictional books. The interaction between the books and the young participants in the study, along with the discussions, elicited the readers' emotional and intellectual reflections towards the events and characters described in the books. The term "inner world" refers to matters such as readers' memories and their emotional and intellectual interactions with the text. This chapter includes an analysis of the qualitative data that helps to address the following research questions: What, why and how do successful Turkish adolescent readers read? What features do they like in the books they read? How do they reflect on the fictional texts they read? What opportunities do reading discussions provide them?

6.1 Echoes in Time: Looking at the Past, Present, and Future through Fictional Time

Christianson and Safer (1996) argue that, in psychology, if an event has an emotional effect on a person, he or she is likely to recall the details of this event years later. This may depend on several variables such as the age of the child and the strength of the event. However, according to their claim, the residue of this effect is more persistent when the event is "pleasant" rather than "neutral" or "unpleasant" (p. 219). In the reading discussions, participants had a frequent tendency to refer to their previous reading experiences. This included recalling one of the participant's life experiences that was related to the discussion, a quote from a book, or an emotional moment of the participant that became memorable for the reader.

In one of the sessions, I took some photographs of covers of some children's books from a local bookseller and showed them to the participants on my tablet. There was an 8-inch tablet on the table and six heads were trying to see what cover was displayed on the screen. Sometimes there were several books in one picture, and the participants were talking about the different books at the same time. I tried not to be involved in these moments as I wanted to hear their immediate reaction when they saw the covers of books they had read before. I simply explained to them that I had a surprise for them when I showed them

some pictures, and I added, “You might have read some of these books, so please feel free to say anything you want to say about them. You can also say whatever you recall from that book” (3Words). As I started changing the pictures on the screen that displayed the children’s books, they began travelling through their memories. It was not easy to catch who was saying what in these exciting moments. When the readers were looking at the book covers of the children’s texts, they started recalling their memories of some of the ones that they had read:

Isfendiyar: *The Outcast Child*

Radley: I have read that!

[...]

Panther: Yes, *The Silver Patens!*

Radley: [...] There was tulip competition in *The Black Tulip*, and the man was making a black tulip and got rewarded, something like that. It was a very beautiful book.

Isfendiyar: *Peter Pan!* [He is shouting here with excitement.]

Snowbird: I always call it *Peter Pan* [She stresses that her pronunciation is different].

These books were among the students’ childhood readings. The book covers and the names reminded them of their childhood. Radley’s stress on the words when she was saying “a very beautiful” showed how strong her feelings were. Their excitement was evident and they recalled emotional moments from their childhood. Isfendiyar’s expression is worth noting:

“*Heidi!* Is there not anyone who doesn’t know *Heidi?*” (3Words)

The question he asked, which was opposite to what he actually wanted to ask (“Is there anyone who does not know Heidi?”), shows how excited he was to see that book cover. It was not only the participants who were excited to see the examples of their childhood reading but I, myself, as a researcher, also joined the discussions and expressed my feelings:

Snowbird: *Alice in Wonderland*.

[...]

Radley: There was a rabbit.

Snowbird: Yes, it was dodging and entering a place.

Osman: Haha, it seemed as if a rabbit leaves. (3Words)

The exclaimed shared experiences in the responses and the participants' excitement suggests that for these students, just seeing the covers and titles of the childhood readings was enough to jog their memories of the books. This suggests that even a long time after reading a children's book (between five and twenty-three years in this case), readers may recall events in the texts they read.

In addition, simply seeing books that they had read when they were children and talking about these books evoked memories of the participants' childhood. In the discussion of *Ship*, *Heroin*, and *The Curious Incident*, for example, they identified themselves with a fictional character and referred to their childhood. MagicBookmark articulated her identification with Christopher several times:

I would also imagine. If everyone died, I would go into ice-cream shops. I remember well. But then I would sit and cry because you are scared at some point because you have no one, nothing to do [...]. (*The Curious Incident*)

She recalled this scene upon reading the chapter where the character Christopher describes his dream. Christopher dreams that everyone dies except autistic children because of an illness that spreads to people who can understand what others feel. He can go anywhere without having to worry that someone might touch him. He can do anything he wants, and this makes him happy (Haddon, 2004). Here, MagicBookmark's recollection of her dream was connected to Christopher's dream as both were children at the time of the dream and presenting a desire to control their world without the influence of others. Reading a similar scene that she experienced in her childhood enabled her to remember her experience. This shows how fiction can possibly function as a lighthouse that guides experiences within one's inner world, enabling readers

both to illuminate their previous and current experiences and explore things that may not be possible to experience in real life.

The reading discussions also seemed to be worked as a kind of bridge that connected different fictional times, characters, and places. The readers, as active agents in the co-creation of the fiction, made connections between these fictional spaces and their real-world times and places. It was not only students who recalled their childhood, but also myself as a researcher. In the discussions of *Heroin*, for instance, they were discussing one of the characters' first encounters with drugs in a pub:

He is taking in some smoke deeply, and then passing the cocaine-laced cigarette to me inattentively, as if saying "what of it?" Sibel's derisive glances are flowing to Tolga's eyes, and then both glances are meeting in derisive laughter. I am watching with a gradually increasing anger. I am reaching out for the cigarette. I do not care how surprised Dünya is. One breath, one more. A new breath, one more. That's it! (*Heroin*, p.213)

The discussions around this evoked my memories of childhood, which were of a time when I felt I was being excluded:

Osman: I recall my childhood, for example. Those who were older than us didn't want to take along those who were not smoking. I don't know, maybe you don't experience such things now.

Isfendiyyar: It is still the same in villages. (*Heroin*)

This scene connected my childhood to the participants' childhood. Isfendiyyar gave examples of how children started smoking and drinking alcohol in village because of peer pressure. Others gave examples from their school without explaining in detail as it might have been a problem if they revealed certain things to me as an adult. The participants were the same age as the book character who inhales the cocaine through the nose. Therefore, it did not evoke their memories of childhood, but it turned their attention to the problems that they were confronting at the time, along with their peers. Then they tried to find out the reasons for starting this kind of dangerous habit and suggested some possible solution strategies. They agreed that this particular book or these kinds of fictional books should be read instead of non-fiction books in schools to

prevent students from starting harmful habits. However, they had different views about the suitable age to read this book. Radley and Tess thought middle school, “especially 7th and 8th grades,” or just before they start high school would be a suitable time to read it because students “start a new life in high school, [therefore they] should learn how to protect themselves in advance” (*Heroin*) whereas Panther and Isfendiyar thought the first year of secondary school would be a more suitable time to read as “when people start high school, their education levels, etc. are similar,” as compared to middle school:

Panther: In middle school, they draw attention with their success or social activities. But they are unable to do this in high school¹⁸, and they seek reasons to draw attention, and one of the ways [they find] attention is with bad habits.

Osman: Yes, it is very interesting.

Panther: So he [the student] needs to smoke or swear more.

Isfendiyar: He needs to behave like them.

Panther: Exactly. This is because he needs to be active in social life and wants to be recognised. The reason for starting [bad habits] in high school is this.

Radley: [The reason is that] there is the need to be different. (*Heroin*)

The participants appeared very engaged these discussions. The scene depicted in the book and the discussion of it deepened all of our thoughts on the matter. While they were trying to establish the nature of the problem and find solutions to it, they touched on different matters related to what they considered bad habits in schools. Presumably, Panther did not want to criticise the schooling system or stress the decreased encouragement they receive in high school compared to middle school. However, from his point of view, these were some factors that became a source of inclination to harmful habits. After being an observer and a critic of this social issue in light of the fictional life scene, they

¹⁸ Middle school students are placed in high schools according to their exam scores that they earn at the end of the middle school. For this reason, the success levels of the students in a high school are similar, as explained in Chapter 3.

started looking at their situation as young people who had the potential to be affected by these kinds of issues in real life:

Isfendiyar: I did not have sympathy for them, in fact. On the contrary, I started to back away from my bad habits with the fear of advancing [them].

Osman: So, did you give up drugs?

[Laughter]

Isfendiyar: I mean, I avoid both smoking and alcohol.

Osman: After reading [the book]?

Isfendiyar: [Nod]

Osman: It affected you in this way?

Isfendiyar: [Nod]

Radley: I was in my first year of middle school I think. You know there were many references to cigarettes, alcohol, stuff like that [in the book]. Someone, I think it was my friend's father, told me, "What kind of book is that, why would you even read this? Talking about a lot of things, making you closer to heroin!" and so on. Actually, how can I say... he said it is showing that it is normal. But after finishing the book, smoking, alcohol... it led to a feeling that even smoking a cigarette will cause heroin addiction in the future. Like exactly what Isfendiyar said, even alcohol seemed very bad, how I can say, it mustn't be drunk.

Osman: What did you think, Tess?

Tess: I didn't think like that. I mean, like, I should avoid cigarettes, alcohol, or whatever. I just had compassion for them. You know, I had just thought that it would be better if they were more judicious. (*Heroin*)

Isfendiyar had chosen the book to read for my fieldwork. He had finished the book a couple of days before the reading session. He might still have been feeling the influence of the text at the time of speaking. However, this does not

mean he did not really “avoid” these kinds of habits. As I stressed in the limitations section in Chapter 8, his and Radley’s responses here may also have been a response to me as an adult researcher. However, this does not mean that what they said did not reflect their actual feelings or thoughts.

Over the discussions of *Heroin*, Isfendiyar’s sensitivity was visible. He reduced his tone of voice when he talked about things that made him upset in the book and when he referred to real-life examples related to book incidents. Towards the end of the discussions, he pointed out that “if literature teachers asked students to read this book and asked questions from the book in an exam, I think our students’ view of alcohol, cigarettes, and bad habits would change a lot” (*Heroin*). This sentence shows Isfendiyar’s observation of his school. He thought that students had the wrong attitudes towards “bad habits” , and that something should be done to change their perspectives. One of the ways he suggested was making this book compulsory for literature classes. Radley’s example includes a quote from an adult who thought the book would have a negative impact on her. The details she gave about this conversation show how she was influenced by the book at the time of reading it. The adult’s warnings about the possible harm of the book did not change her intention to read the book even though the discussion took place when she was only 13 years old. Leonardo also had a similar reflection when discussing the effects of *Sociopath* on him. He was more “careful” not to continue his habits that were similar to Sociopath’s, described in the text (3Words).

The participants had the chance to explore their past, present, and future in the light of the textual characters’ experiences. This might have enabled them to deepen their understanding of themselves and others. This opportunity also added to their awareness of the problems their peers confront in their social life. Arguably, according to what they said, this awareness helped them to be alert to incidents that may lead them to take up the “bad habits” depicted in the novel. In the next section, as another way of developing self-awareness, I will analyse the participants’ drawings of fictional books they liked and their comments on the drawings.

6.2 Echoes in Art: Books in Readers' Drawings

Transmediation, or “the process of taking understandings from one system and moving into another sign system” (Short et al., 2000, p.160) is a good way of encouraging students to respond to literature in a creative way. By doing this, students have the chance not only to show how they understand the text but also to produce a new story in response to the story they read. This type of creative response also forms a medium to deepen students’ “aesthetic transaction” with the texts, enabling them to:

Savor, deepen, the lived-through experience, to recapture and reflect on it, to organise their sense of it. In the light of such awareness, students can discover how the new experience, the evoked literary work, relates both to the text and to their earlier experience and assumptions; they can become self-critical and hence grow in capacity to evoke and to criticise (Rosenblatt, 1986, p.126).

For the reasons above, reader response scholars value responses across multiple sign systems, including music, drama, drawing (Arizpe et al., 2014a, b; Short et al., 2000), and photography (Arizpe et al., 2011). To deepen the aesthetic transaction, I asked students to draw an imaginary book cover for a book they liked reading and write three words related to the story. Then they tried to guess the name of the book drawn by their peers. Afterwards, they discussed the books and tried to understand what they meant to their peers by asking questions about the drawings. They all enjoyed the activity, including Kdr, who was not “a keen artist” (3Words).

All of the students attended this session, and there were ten drawings in total. Due to space limitations, I will not analyse all the pictures in detail; however, I will mention certain aspects of them and analyse three drawings in detail, by Leonardo, Isfendiyar, and MagicBookmark. This analysis will add to my overall analysis in terms of understanding how the readers stored the fictional texts in their memories and why they did that.

It was possible to see the connection between students’ reading choices and the books they chose to draw for this activity. Kdr, for instance, liked reading religious books and he drew the book called *The Fight to Survive (Var Olmak*

Kavgası, by Mehmed Niyazi), in which a religious person's struggle is depicted. This person becomes an "imam in a village, and establishes a school there. Then [he tries to deal with] 'wrong beliefs' in the village. Then he is imprisoned for - it is a political expression - but in relation to radicalisation" (3Words). While explaining the story, he used the term "the fight to survive" as if it were his own idea:

MagicBookmark: Why did you paint this [pointing to the person in the picture and the words written] in three colours?

Kdr: Because surviving doesn't belong to a certain group in the community. All the people in communities or nations, all mankind, maintain the fight to survive. But they put different reasons for this. There was a different reasoning for the fight to survive in here too, but it was addressing the community and was able to tie different colours together. (3Words)

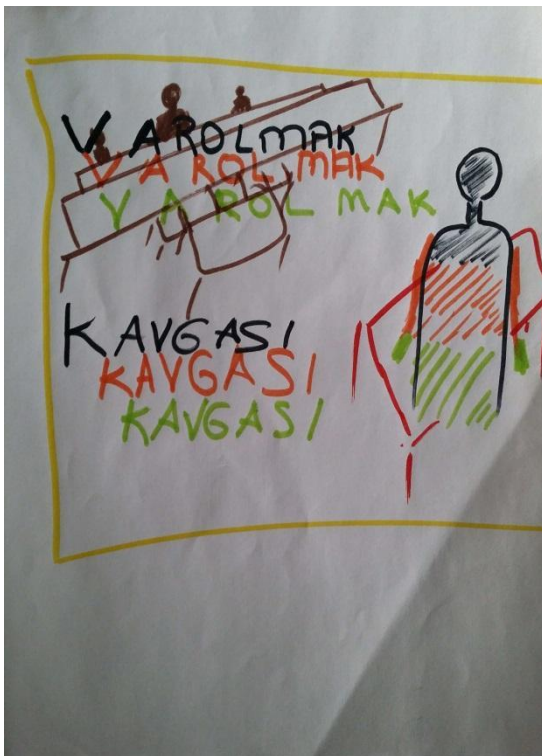


Figure 6. 1 Kdr's Drawing: *The Fight to Survive*

According to Kdr's explanations, everyone has a kind of fight in their lives, but their fights are for different reasons. Kdr drew a person coloured with black, orange, and green to symbolise "different colours" in the community. This person's fight was for the coexistence of the community from his point of view, and this fight enabled the character to "find himself" (3Words). The character's

fight in the fictional book enabled Kdr to question himself regarding his “purposes:”

If you are maintaining a fight or if you are living for a purpose, firstly, you should know it well. I mean what is your purpose? (...). (3Words)

Kdr’s expressions about the character and the book showed that he supported the character and the ideas presented in the book. Even though his peers asked some challenging questions that were difficult to answer because they were political, he was confident when he was revealing his religious aspect when answering the questions:

MagicBookmark: When you read this book, did you want to change what you wanted to do before?

Kdr: There was no such thing that I wanted to do.

MagicBookmark: No. I mean did you want to change your plans?

Kdr: What do you mean by changing?

MagicBookmark: For example, he opened a school, and then he was prosecuted for radicalisation. By considering the thoughts of the community, did you say, I shouldn’t do this; instead, I should do this?

Kdr: I mean, I did not think such things in general because the main character didn’t do anything wrong. (3Words)

MagicBookmark’s questions focused on the characters’ actions that caused his imprisonment. She was indirectly asking Kdr whether he had such inclinations that may lead to a similar result. She asked the question indirectly because it is a sensitive matter. In addition to the political matters mentioned in Chapter 2, religion is another sensitive issue in Turkey. This is because there have been issues between different religious groups, some groups that radicalise Islam and secularist groups. For example many Islamic group leaders were prosecuted and hanged after the establishment of Turkey and these kinds of problems continue today (Toker, 1968). Therefore, people still have the thought that talking about religious matters in public areas may be dangerous. However, according to Kdr,

the character's actions were not "wrong" even though he was imprisoned. His confidence in his response was recognised by BoiceLove:

I mean it might be honesty; it may encourage him to defend his thoughts, to express his thoughts freely. It may encourage him to be braver.

(3Words)

Similarly, Tess chose to draw a book from her favourite genre, crime, called *The Face of Death* by Cody McFadyen. Her peers asked questions about the plot in order to understand the mystery behind the murder depicted in the book. She did not seem to be hiding how she felt about the characters and their actions as she indicated that she "swore at" (3Words) the girl character when she learnt that she was responsible for the murder. Tess swore at the girl because she could have finished the investigation early by admitting her crime to the police when they first asked her. Although she liked reading the book, she was unhappy with the unexpected ending of the story. From her perspective, Eylül, the protagonist of *Heroin*, "looked stupid," too (*Heroin*) as she did not need to commit suicide. She could have found a solution to her problem instead of committing suicide. In both cases, the result of the characters' actions is death. Nevertheless, this does not mean that this was the reason for her anger towards the characters; instead, it could be the rationale for the result. She revealed in another discussion that she sometimes found the killer's behaviour acceptable if she found that there was a 'right reason' for it.

The examples above suggest that this activity revealed the students' emotional connection with the stories. Isfendiyar drew the book called *Metal Storm* (see Figure 6.2 below), which is a fantasy and tells the story of Turkish soldiers who go to Africa to help people who are trying to save their lands from the USA.

He drew a "blood lake" that shows people died because of a "nuclear bomb" dropped by America. He was "filled with so much hate and anger" towards "external powers," especially "America" (3Words). "People who died for the sake of their homeland drew [his] interest," and he became "upset" about reading this. His choice of an aeroplane in black symbolises the evil that causes bloodshed and destroys the green tree. The three phrases he chose to describe the book were "love of homeland," "love of duty," and "external powers." The

indicators of the first two phrases in the picture were people who were “killed by a nuclear bomb,” which is the black coloured material under the plane.

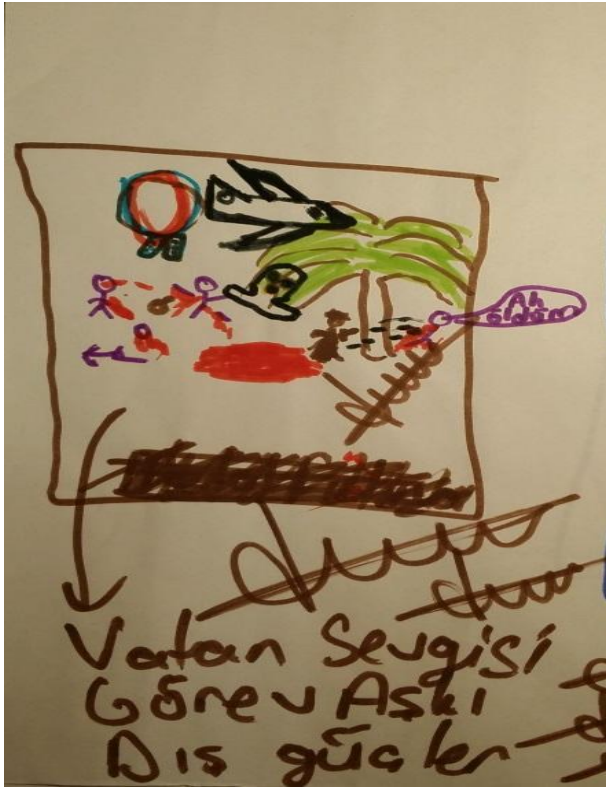


Figure 6. 2 Isfendiya's Drawing: *Metal Storm*

He said “the book increased the value of soldiers and police” in his view, and he “started to respect these jobs and the army became [his] dream job” (3Words):

Osman: You mean you could have been a soldier and this meant it could have changed your life. But you could still become a soldier.

Isfendiya: I won't be able to [he is reducing his volume]. (3Words)

After the reading session, we had a chance to discuss this matter with Isfendiya, and he said because of a certain problem, he will not be allowed to be a soldier. His sadness was visible while he was expressing this information. Isfendiya referred to several fantasy books he read when he was in middle school, but he did not read those kinds of books at the time of our conversation as “they look absurd now” (Isfendiya). *Metal Storm* was one of the books that held a place in Isfendiya's memory:

Osman: Yes, books are good friends. Have you ever dreamed about the characters of a book after reading the book?

Isfendiyar: Yes. I found myself inside *Metal Storm*.

Osman: Ha ha!

Isfendiyar: Nuclear bomb is dropping your head, run brother!

Osman: Ha ha! This must be just after reading the book.

Isfendiyar: I think it wasn't just after reading it. I still have dreams about it.

Although he did not reveal the details of his dreams, he seemed to find himself inside the events. According to him, these dreams were not just after reading the book. Although he had read the book when he was in 6th grade, he said 'he still has dreams' about this book. As psychoanalysis believes (Freud, 2013), dreams are connected to the subconscious of the dreamer and if Isfendiyar's dream was one of these particular dreams, then the book must have found a place in his subconscious. As discussed above, he indicated his sadness about the death of soldiers because of the nuclear bomb. Given his aspiration to become a soldier, he seems to have found a close connection between himself and the soldiers who were killed by the nuclear bomb.

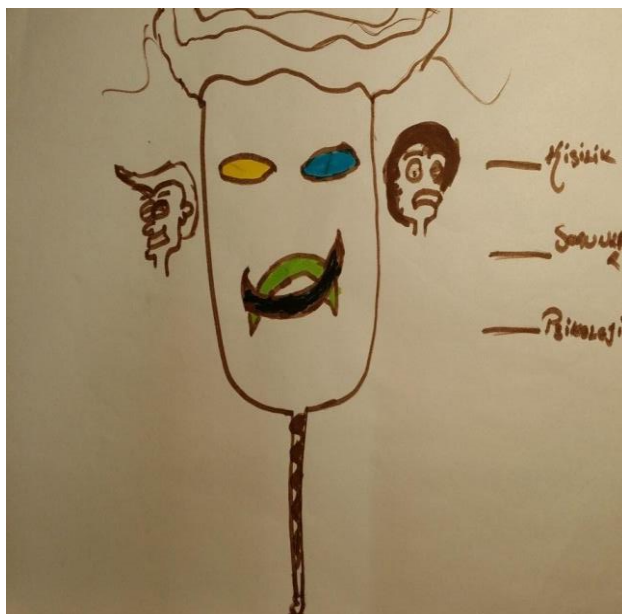


Figure 6. 3 Leonardo's Drawing: *Confessions of a Sociopath: A Life Spent Hiding in Plain Sight*

Leonardo drew a thought-provoking cover of *Confessions of a Sociopath: A Life Spent Hiding in Plain Sight* by M.E. Thomas (a pseudonym) ((Figure 6.3), an autobiography of the author who describes herself as a sociopath (Dr. Phil, 2003;

Ronson, 2013). This book cover was similar to the original book cover, both portraying the mask sociopaths wear to hide their real faces. However, Leonardo used different colours for the eyes and mouths (he drew two shapes of mouth in one mask), which showed the “dual personality” of sociopaths (3Words). He added two different faces of one person as sociopaths can be both “successful and aggressive or anarchist” (3Words).

In contrast to the other activities, during the discussions of Leonardo’s drawing, everyone was quiet, as if they were hesitating to say anything, but then Kdr made a wisecrack:

Osman: What kind of problems did the sociopath have?

Kdr: Teacher, do you mean Leonardo or the sociopath?

(Laughter)

Leonardo: No not me! Ay! I might be like that, but! [laughter] Ok. I have got an inclination [to behave like a sociopath] or something [like that]. I might be anarchic too! But not to the public. I don’t think [I am anarchic] very much.

Osman: When did you read the book?

Leonardo: At the end of the first term?

Osman: How did you feel?

Leonardo: Alas! I’m finished! I said.

MagicBookmark: I’m a sociopath, ha ha.

Leonardo: No. I didn’t want to think that. I mean, I am prone to violence, but I can at least stop myself. I thought at least I can protect myself from the things at the end of the book by being calm.

Osman: So, you thought it is something about you.

Leonardo: At some point. You find something from yourself in every book.

Osman: How do you think the book affected your friends?

Kdr: I think he found himself in the book: a picture of a sociopath.

MagicBookmark: I think it is like looking in the mirror. There was the Mirror of Erised in *Harry Potter*; you would look at it and see things that you wanted. It is like that. He looked and saw himself. It is like awareness. Not exactly. I don't think he is a sociopath.

Leonardo: Then, don't stay by yourself!

MagicBookmark: We won't leave you alone then.

Presumably, Leonardo's self-awareness developed after reading this book, drawing a book cover for it, and talking about it. His peers also had the chance to learn about this "illness" from someone who has "some" characteristics of it (3Words). BookMonster found his drawings "too scary," and BoiceLove did not say a single word during the discussion. She only joined her peers when everyone laughed. Kdr was Leonardo's classmate, and MagicBookmark was one of his friends. Arguably, their comments about him "finding" and "mirroring" himself in the book could be suggesting some truth about his character; Leonardo also admitted that he thought, after reading the book, that he could "stop himself" from "extreme" things. The quotations above say something about how similar he found himself to the sociopath in the book. Sentences like "I am prone to violence," "I might be like that," "I might be anarchic too," and "Alas! I am finished!" could be telling some truth. He wrote that the book was his favourite book in the questionnaire as he "found himself" in the book, "he felt good," and he thought he "developed" himself when he read the book (Leonardo). Even if I cannot take all the things he admitted as his true personality, considering the similar points made by his friends such as "I think he found himself in the book: a picture of a sociopath," the book presumably added to his awareness about sociopaths as someone who might have some sociopathic characteristics.

Another point I would like to make is about MagicBookmark's comment on the Mirror of Erised. This mirror was not an ordinary mirror:

It was a magnificent mirror, as high as the ceiling, with an ornate gold frame, standing on two clawed feet. There was an inscription carved around the top: Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi (Rowling, 1998, p.167).

The sentence on the mirror can be read as “I show not your face but your heart’s desire” backwards. It is the mirror where Harry sees his parents. Upon his conversation with Albus Dumbledore, Harry thinks, “It shows us what we want... whatever we want...” (Rowling, 1998, p. 71). However, according to Dumbledore: It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts (*ibid*, 1998, p.71).

Obviously, MagicBookmark made a connection between the book and the Mirror of Erised. Interestingly, she recalled the mirror as something that showed “things that you wanted” to see, more like what Harry thought rather than how Dumbledore explained it. According to MagicBookmark, Leonardo wanted to see himself in the book, and he did. She thought that Leonardo’s intentions were an important factor in his seeing himself in the book. Nevertheless, she adds, “Not exactly. I don’t think he is a sociopath” to stress that she did not see her friend as a sociopath. On the other hand, arguably, the Mirror of Erised influenced her when she read the book or watched the movie as she tried to explain a real-life issue in reference to the mirror.

Everyone became aware of what a sociopath looked like even though they had not read the book before. During the discussion of the book, Leonardo explained some important characteristics of a sociopath such as “being aggressive and violent” (3Words, Leonardo), which are similar to the scientific descriptions of sociopaths given by the American Psychiatric Association (2012); however, some of them were related to having dual characteristics, as described by Watkin (1984).

Similar to Leonardo, MagicBookmark drew her favourite book, *Heart*, by Edmondo De Amicis (see Figure 6. below). This novel was a “milestone” for her and “allowed her to look at life from a very different meaningful perspective” (MagicBookmark):

The reason I drew it simply was, I mean, a child keeps these things alive in his heart; I thought these are mainly sweet things such as his mother and father, home, his school bus, his park, and the smiling sun. The reason I used “love,” “success,” and “farewell” as the three words is that firstly, it describes the friendship very beautifully. “Success,” as I loved the encouragement of the child’s parents for his consistent success. As for

“farewell,” the scenes at the end of this book when he was bidding farewell to his school, his mother, his father, and himself were so realistic. (3Words)



Figure 6. 4 MagicBookmark’s Drawing: *Heart*

It was not only the protagonist, Enrico, but also his mother and father who bid farewell to the school because they had all studied there.

He returned to the school and spoke to it. When he was speaking to the school, he recalled his friends’ jokes. This attracted my attention a lot because he was treating the school as if it was a living entity; he was valuing it. The school had sentimental value for him. (3Words, MagicBookmark)

MagicBookmark said she read the book when she was in the 4th grade and, the book “attached” her to school and her teacher (3Words). She “still visits[ed]” her teacher on [religious] holidays and “kiss[ed] his hand first¹⁹.” Her teacher also valued her by calling her “my daughter” (3Words). This particular book also held a place in another participant’s memory. Although it was not Panther’s favourite, he chose to describe a scene from *Heart* as his most memorable scene in response to the question in the questionnaire: “The child cried to not go to

¹⁹ Visiting elderly people and kissing their hands during religious holidays is a tradition in Turkey. Kissing someone’s hand first shows the special value given to that person.

school. I was eight when I read it. I saw myself in the text. I found the author's wording so sincere" (Panther).

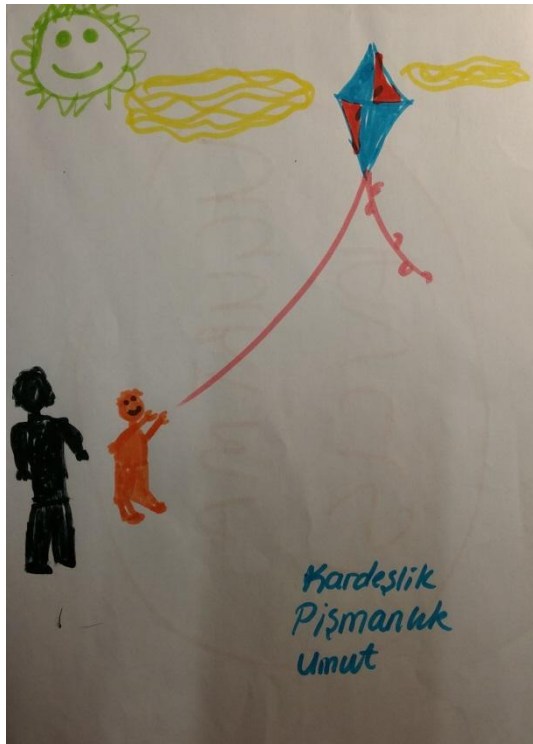


Figure 6. 5 BookMonster's Drawing: *The Kite Runner*

BookMonster drew Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. She "normally" did not "read these kinds of books" as she read "adventure and detective" stories, but this was the first book she read as something "humanistic" (3Words). Although she said that "there was too much sorrow. [She did not] like it this way," "but it was [a] delightful" experience for her. BookMonster was confused about how to describe her feelings, which might be because she did not want to read an upsetting scene:

MagicBookmark: How did you feel about the similar destiny of the nephew and the father?

BookMonster: Do the father and nephew have a similar destiny?

MagicBookmark: No, sorry, I mean this child's father shares a similar destiny with the child who died. Both of them were victims of something, you remember?

Leonardo: No way!

BookMonster: Was this child also a victim of that?

Leonardo: Oh!

MagicBookmark: Yes, so you don't recall it?

BookMonster: I don't recall it. [Thinking] Oh! It has badly affected me right now, yeah!

MagicBookmark: Let's say a worse situation of abuse.

Leonardo: Oh! Okay!

[...]

How did you feel now when you heard this?

BookMonster: Bad!

Leonardo: Bad! (3Words)

Although she was upset because of the incidents depicted in the book, she was pleased to have read this book. MagicBookmark also read this book, and over the discussion, she asked many questions to BookMonster about her feelings about certain scenes. However, one of these questions affected other participants as well as BookMonster. Presumably, MagicBookmark was also affected by the rape scene as it was at the centre of her own questions.

Returning to Rosenblatt, these examples illuminate her ideas about the potential of creative response. The students showed how they deepened and savoured the lived-through experience through their verbal, written, and drawn responses. They sometimes became self-critical, as seen in Leonardo's situation. They were able to capture links between their pictures and "both the text and their earlier experience and assumptions." (Rosenblatt, 1986, p.126) Also, they had the chance to learn about different ways of interpreting the text and the images through listening and responding to each other's drawings and responses. From a practical perspective, this drawing activity enabled the young readers to catch a glimpse of the inner world of their peers and of themselves, including desires, ways of thinking, purposes, and expectations. Also, they had the opportunity to encounter five books in about 40 minutes from different perspectives and to see

how these books held a place in a reader's memories. In the next section, I will draw attention to how reading fiction that depicts real-life issues increased readers' awareness of those issues as well as empathy and theory of mind (ToM) skills.

6.3 Echoes in Mind: Increasing Awareness and Developing Empathy

Reading the life-like simulations that we do not have a chance to experience in real life gives readers a chance to develop a particular emotion (Maret al., 2008), something that may not occur through non-fiction. In the *Fault* discussions, the students had the chance to explore issues that they had never experienced, including cancer and death. They tried to look at the world from the perspective of people with cancer and understand their fears and hopes. This awareness also helped them to review their perspectives on those issues:

MagicBookmark: [...] many of us want to be remembered. But, in my opinion, Hazel's desire to be forgotten is well represented in the book, which reflected my life. Because I started thinking how selfish I can be. I wasn't deeply aware of this until I read it [...]

BoiceLove: After reading the book, I thought what I would think if I die. I would probably recall my memories, sad memories so on. I would probably feel that they were for nothing. All the heartbreak... In my view, it is all pointless; we should look at the future, forgetting those things.

BookMonster: I was scared. I mean, how life is, it's full of unexpected events. It was so obvious in this book. And death is not very scary for the deceased; it is worse for those who remain. (*Fault*)

Through "text-to-life and life-to-text" strategies (Green and Meyer, 1991; Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 78), readers made connections between their lives and the story characters' lives. This connection enabled them to understand and to become more critical of themselves. While MagicBookmark thought of herself as being "selfish," BoiceLove tried to assume what she would recall if she were dying. They imagined themselves as someone who dies. BoiceLove thought that she would review her memories, and then presumably after imagining herself

doing this, she found that spending time thinking of “all the heartbreak” was “pointless” and stressed the importance of “the future.” BookMonster “was scared” about imagining the “unexpected events” that she could herself confront, too.

In this particular discussion of *Fault*, the three female students focused on different aspects of the incident that evoked different emotions in these readers. This is reminiscent of the active role of readers in the meaning-making process. Each of them read the book, and while reading the symbols of the books, something made them think about an issue related to their experiences, expectations, memories, emotions, or desires. MagicBookmark focused on the period after death and questioned the ethics of the desire to be memorable. BoiceLove started talking just after MagicBookmark completed her sentence. However, she did not respond to what MagicBookmark was saying. Instead, she brought a completely new matter to the agenda: imagining death and what they should do before coming to that stage. So, unlike MagicBookmark, her attention was on the time before death, not after. Perhaps she wanted to highlight something more important than what her peer was saying. BookMonster’s interest was about the time of death, the suddenness of death or cancer. She also sympathised with the relatives and friends of someone who dies. In fact, the time after death was at the centre of both BookMonster’s and MagicBookmark’s argument, with the former looking at the situation from the perspective of “remaining” and the latter presenting the view of the dead person.

Another point I would like to make is about BookMonster’s feelings of fear. According to Mar et al. (2008), when a reader reads something fearful in real life, she experiences the “genuine fear” even though the scene she is reading is not real (p.173). It is possible to see this kind of fear in BookMonster’s response above. The reading of *Fault* enabled her to examine life. She “was scared” as she thought “life is full of unexpected events” and that one of these events could find her (*Fault*). Arguably, not only hers but also her friends’ responses showed the emotional echoes of deep feelings on death.

Because *Fault* was presented through the eyes of a cancer patient and depicted cancer-related issues, the participants showed how their understanding of the issue deepened. However, when the focalizer (the person through whose eyes

the story is depicted) changed, they started to look at the world through this person's eyes, and this allowed them to gain new perspectives as they read. In *Ship*, for example, the effort they showed to understand childhood psychology is worth noting:

MagicBookmark: In my opinion, what if she could wait a little more? As it says, you could see it [a helping hand] if you take the road. I mean, it could be a little bit about being impatient. If he had tried another way instead of being a fish, I mean, he will not turn into a fish.

Leonardo: The reason for this is that his grandfather is not aware of his loneliness as he suffers everything in silence. [...] He is impatient. Leave him to be impatient. He is unable to make himself understood for years. He is completely alone. He has nothing to lose.

MagicBookmark: But there is a life to lose.

Leonardo: In this situation, life has no meaning.

MagicBookmark: But making your life important, changing something rests with you. For example, he imagines biting [someone]. Think about his psychology. Loneliness is hard. If you magnify this, it doesn't stay like that, it branches off, like anger, hate, bullying whatever. [...]

Leonardo: But he didn't stay strong [...]; it was seriously difficult. You have no mother, no father; your grandfather brings you up. You remain under pressure. (*Ship*)

Leonardo and MagicBookmark commented on the child's final decision to jump into the lake, which results in his death. Apparently, they have different views on this decision. They both put forward some details of the child's life experiences to bring reasoning to their comments. They tried to understand how he might be feeling from experiencing such "loneliness." Although they looked at the matter from different perspectives, both tried to persuade the other to "think about his psychology." Arguably, trying to empathise with the child character increased their awareness of childhood psychology and loneliness. Similar arguments were brought forward in School 1 (Appendix 8), however, Panther's idea showed a deeper analysis of the child's inner world:

In fact, when the child is jumping into the lake, he is thinking of being a fish, reaching The White Ship, which is his other dream rather than his death. In fact, there is a turn to a new belief because of losing a belief.
(*Ship*)

Books are often seen as a “safe place” for readers to experience something that they cannot experience in real life (Johnson et al., 2013). The examples above show how the readers’ awareness of social issues increased by opening ways for them to discuss and explore these issues. MagicBookmark’s remarkable comments highlight this issue well:

While reading a book, the characters play in front of our eyes like a film. It looks like we are looking through the protagonist or any character we chose. Because the need for empathy or to feel how he is responding maybe, I don’t know, because it is a different thing that we haven’t experienced before. We are trying to experience it within ourselves. Augustus’s reflections look like he is denying [death]. But, not thinking selfishly, if we look at it more clearly, there is a benefit to overcoming this. You can go to B city from A city in three to five different ways. It is certain; everyone will die. They say to Augustus, he will die. But, I will die too [...] (*Fault*)

In the quote above, MagicBookmark defends Augustus as she thinks Augustus’s reflections were as they should be. According to her, no one should give up the joy of life because of having a terminal illness. She thought that death could find him, and anyone, at any time. She tried to look at the situation through the eyes of Augustus, and this helped her to feel what he might have felt. Similarly, in School 2, Radley tried to empathise with Augustus. She thought that his behaviour was due to something that “he couldn’t help; cancer is something that happens without one wanting it to.”

Reading fiction offers readers a chance to cognitively simulate the real world, and this fosters emotional links between the reader and the text (Mar, Djikic and Oatley, 2008). This emotional interaction requires the reader to empathise with (one of) the characters and to understand their way of thinking. Eventually, reading fiction develops empathy and ToM (Oatley, 1999b). Because of fiction’s connection to real life, and because it presents issues and complexities that

people face in real life, it helps people to understand what others think and feel (Kidd and Castano, 2013). The extracts above from the discussions of the two fictional texts, *Fault* and *Ship*, show how the interaction with the text and the discussion of this in a reading group encouraged the readers to use their empathy and ToM skills. Although I did not refer to these two skills over the course of the fieldwork, some of the students stressed them a couple of times. In the discussion of *Brother*, for instance, Snowbird had an instinctive understanding of how reading can help the reader understand others:

I also paid attention to something. The man valued literature that much because he wanted to understand people's feelings. In my opinion, he read that number of books for this reason. Firstly, he hoped for help from psychology, philosophy, and science, but could not find what he had been looking for. Then he stopped using cinema to understand feelings [and] how he could understand people. (*Brother*)

Because of Ahmet's (the main protagonist's) illness, he is unable to understand feelings and thoughts and therefore he has difficulty knowing how to respond in different situations such as when hearing somebody has died. Ahmet's house is full of books with different genre names for each room such as murder room, jealousy room, and love room. However, the book does not give the reason why he reads books and values literature. In the first chapter, Ahmet thinks that literature is the only medium that shows human emotions and plumbs the depths of human psychology. It was Snowbird's assumption that literature was a tool for him to think and increase his understanding of human feelings.

When exchanging views on *Prince*, everyone was talking about the selfishness of the characters. Leonardo suddenly spoke aloud:

Oh! Our problem is that we are unable to empathise with them [characters]!

He stressed empathy on several occasions. He did this when he disagreed with what his peers said. It is possible to see how he empathised with the characters from his words below:

I mean, the author made the criticism that being full of oneself looks logical, being king looks logical, because they are the one and only. When

we're alone, we are all full of ourselves. You know, if I were alone as much as him, I would be the most handsome, the richest, and so on.

According to his responses, Leonardo tried to persuade his peers to look at things from the characters' perspectives. He used the sense of belonging, saying "when we were alone." This is a way to make others think about themselves, in other words, to empathise with the characters. His last sentence was a type of response to the question, "What would you do if you were in their situation?" Similar comments were made in other reading sessions as well. In the example below, Radley was trying to help her friend understand the situation:

Snowbird: It affected me very much because *An Imperial Affliction*²⁰ didn't have an end.

Radley: He was depicting his daughter's life. She was suffering from cancer. I believe he did the right thing because life is like that. When we die, there will be no continuation, and we won't be able to know the continuation. For Van Houten, I mean, his daughter may have died at that time, and because of that, he wanted to cut [the story] because his daughter didn't know the rest [of her life], so he did not want to let us know either (*Fault*).

Radley used her ToM skills to understand what Van Houten might have thought. The reasoning she put forward here requires her to do embedded mind reading (Nikolajeva, 2013). She tried to understand what Van Houten thought of his daughter. She encouraged her friends to look at the matter from the point of view of the fictional author. In this way, she encouraged them to do a higher order mind reading, because they needed to understand what Radley thought what Van Houten thought of his daughter. Similarly, in the *Ship* discussions, the participants often had a tendency to empathise with the child character. They tried to understand how he felt and why he felt that way. They sometimes made the connection between his life and their own lives. At the end of the reading of *Ship*, Leonardo added:

Leonardo: Yeah! This last part of the book should be read in our school!

Osman: Why should it be read in the school?

²⁰ It is a fiction that is referred to in *Fault*.

Leonardo: Because there are many prejudiced people; it is not possible to explain this.

Osman: Do you think it can tear down prejudice?

MagicBookmark: Yes! By speaking in a certain way, prejudice can be broken! (*Ship*)

Both MagicBookmark and Leonardo agreed that reading *Ship* would help to reduce prejudice in their school. The reason they could have such idea was that the book was encouraging them to access a child's world and his dreams and frustrations so that they had the chance to look at the events from a child's perspective. Similar comments were made at the end of the *Heroin* discussions in School 1:

Isfendiyar: In my opinion, if a literature teacher wants this book to be read in class, if he asks about it in the exam, our school's students' view would change towards alcohol, cigarettes, and harmful habits.

Osman: Ok. This is a novel, a literary work. Do you think a novel or a non-fiction book has more of an effect?

Radley: It is definitely a book like this.

Osman: Why do you think that?

Radley: Firstly, reading non-fiction books seems boring for every age group as there is a certain approach [in those books]. Also, here [in fiction], there is a friend setting and so on. These are very nice; we feel more attached. Therefore they seem more realistic to us. Even if non-fiction books are more real in reality, these [fictional books] seem more real to us. (*Heroin*)

Here, the reasoning Radley put forward is supported by Oatley's (1999a) findings that indicate the strong connection between readers' emotions and the fictional texts they read. Firstly, non-fiction books were not fun for her, and she thought that they were not fun for any age group either due to their "certain approach." Her second reason was that adolescent readers "feel more attached" while reading a fictional text as the setting is familiar to them and this makes the

books “more realistic” than non-fiction texts, which are assumed to be representing reality. Here, her attachment to fictional texts and detachment from non-fiction texts can be seen. If her emotional reasoning (the second reason) is accepted as true, and if she was expressing her real feelings and beliefs, then it is likely that when she reads fiction that she enjoys, she perceives them as realistic rather than just as the author’s imagination.

The research suggests that what is presented in the fictional texts sometimes perceived as real (Oatley, 1999; Lamarque, 2007; Strange, 2002). For this reason, Radley’s thoughts could be accepted as her firm beliefs. The boys did not express themselves regarding this matter; however, here, the idea of reading this text with the whole class came from Isfendiyar, who liked reading both fictional and non-fiction texts. Nevertheless, in examining the effect of fiction, gender differences should be considered. As suggested by Cherland (1994), because of girls’ experiences and backgrounds, through reading fiction, they make a different sense of what they read and develop different identities from their male peers.

In the first examples in this section, I tried to show how readers used their empathy and ToM skills to understand how other people are thinking and feeling, and how using these skills helped them increase their self-awareness and awareness of social problems. I provided examples of how the participants encouraged each other to use their emotional and mental skills to understand the characters’ feelings and thoughts, especially by stressing empathy. In the final part, I focused on the students’ thoughts on the benefit of reading fictional texts as a group activity. This section reveals some of the links between reading fiction and understanding others, the first step towards tackling social problems such as prejudice and exclusion.

6.4 Criminals as Heroes and Reading Simulated Violence

Hayakawa (1990) remarks that reading enables one to live and experience other people’s lives. When a reader enters the story world, he or she finds the chance to not only explore the life presented in the text but also to be part of that life by emotionally responding it (Nikolajeva, 2014) and by adopting some perspectives and experiences from that life (Gallese and Goldman, 1998;

Kaufman and Libby, 2012). MagicBookmark's feelings while she was reading a fictional book highlight this close relationship between the fictional life and the reader:

MagicBookmark: [...] It is not like you are watching cinema on a screen. Imagine a cartoon. There are eyes that don't have body or head that always wander around.

Osman: Yes.

MagicBookmark: They watch everything; I am like that. It is different. I am not inside the events, my body is not there, but it is as if I am living there. It is always like I am travelling in different universes [...].

(MagicBookmark)

The metaphor of eyes or a fly on the wall observing and sometimes acting like a character is mentioned in previous research on adolescent response (Arizpe, 1994; Thomson, 1987) when the reader describes where they feel they are in relation to the characters. MagicBookMark's metaphor of "eyes that don't have body" depicted in her cartoon is a literary and visual example of this idea. Although she was not physically living with the fictional characters, she felt "as if [she were] living there." This experience of living inside the events gives the reader the chance to interact with the characters. Even though the eyes were not visible to the characters, they were among them and "travelling" with them. Having the opportunity to watch them from such a close distance and being a witness to the detailed account of their lives/emotions require the owner of these imaginary eyes to take a position with or against them. This is where ToM and empathy step in. If the fictional character meets the expectations of the reader (e.g., the character experiences events similar to those that the reader does), the reader may start adopting some thoughts and experiences from the character (Kaufman and Libby, 2012) and building beliefs upon the story events (Appel and Richter, 2007). Here is Leonardo's self-observation below:

Osman: Do you ever act like a character?

Leonardo: I do. For example, I read Sherlock Holmes a lot. I mean, I want to follow and look for something if I read a murder [news] or something like that.

Osman: Hmm.

Leonardo: Or when I face a bad situation; firstly sit, keep calm, and think what to do.

Osman: Is it Sherlock Holmes' characteristic?

Leonardo: No, Holmes was the first example. Dan Brown characters are like that. Helping good people; small books are like that.

Osman: Yes.

Leonardo: There is a character that helps some people.

Osman: You think it comes from that character.

Leonardo: Yes probably. I read comics as well, from the old times. My father kept them.

[...] I always wanted to have a group, and we help some people.

Osman: You're like a superhero.

Leonardo: Exactly. (Leonardo)

As soon as Leonardo heard the question, he responded by mentioning Sherlock Holmes. "Following an incident" to find evidence to solve the mystery is a characteristic of Sherlock Holmes. Leonardo thought he did things similar to what Holmes does in the story life. He mentioned Dan Brown and comic book characters and tried to show the similarities between them and himself. In his reading choices, his character and expectations should have played a role, but he stressed the learning of virtue. He repeated the phrase "helping people" three times, which shows how he was influenced by the characters and wanted to adopt their behaviours. This conversation is not sufficient evidence to say that his intention to help people by establishing a group occurred with the influence of the books. However, it shows that he was thinking or pretending to be thinking that he wanted to act the way that the characters did. In either case, it is clear that he found the similarities between himself and the three different book characters. Finding these similarities requires readers to think about them and to compare to their own personalities. This thinking process is obvious in

Leonardo's responses above as he showed his critical analysis of the characters and of himself. His description of what he did when he "face[d] a bad situation" reveals his self-awareness, and then his referral to Dan Brown characters shows his analytic approach to the characters. In this way, apparently, he is trying to model himself on the fictional characters.

Like Leonardo, other participants showed their adoption of a fictional character's thoughts:

Tess: [...] The woman [Rizzoli Isles] is thinking that dead people are better than living ones. 'Cos dead people are like, I mean, how I can say, they don't lie or pull tricks, they're as they are. For that reason, she is attached to corpses more [than anything else]. (*Sinner*)

The idea that dead people do not lie is Rizzoli's thought; however, in this conversation, Tess presented it as if it were her own. Here, she took the perspective of this character like the students in Kaufman and Libby's (2012) study. MagicBookmark, also adopted the characters' points of view, for example, when she brought up the idea of "dauntless" in different reading sessions. She related Hazel's thoughts in *Fault* to the idea of "dauntless:"

[...] to remain grateful for her [a dead person's] contributions to me and to be able to remember this in the future is dauntless. [...] when we do good things, we want to show this [to others]. However, showing that this [good thing] was given to us by someone who passed away is dauntless. (*Fault*).

Similarly, in the *Ship* readings, MagicBookmark showed her reaction to the child's choice of death as presented in Chapter 5. These examples show how important being daring was for her. She was a reader of Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy. In *Divergent*, people are divided into factions that show their identity and separate them from others. The author depicts five factions in the book that reflect different characteristics: selfless, peaceful, honest, brave, and intellectual (Roth, 2013). The main character of the dystopian novel, Tris, chooses Dauntless and joins people who are defined as brave. Those who do not adhere to only one category are "divergent," and are excluded from all factions if this is revealed. Tris is one of them but does not reveal herself (Blokker, 2014).

Considering the stress on bravery in the book and MagicBookmark's inclination to relate different matters to being "dauntless," the trilogy could have made an impact on her as a reader. The mention of dares was not the only link she made with her readings; in fact, over the course of the study, she often consulted words from texts to prove her claims.

Fictional stories are simulations of reality, but they are not real even if they are based on real-life stories. However, while reading or watching fiction, the stories can have a strong emotional influence on the audience, leading to a particular reaction. The audience may 'willingly suspend disbelief' -as Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously wrote in 1817- even when they know it is fiction, or when the texts present misinformation and choose to believe in the events represented (Lewandowsky et al., 2005; Marsh and Fazio, 2006; Suits, 2006). This idea is linked to the idea of the authority of text (presented in Chapter 2) and to a tendency to believe what is written in print. Sometimes this belief can increase over the time of reading and become a real world belief (Appel and Richter, 2007; Gallese and Goldman, 1998). While explaining the "darling"²¹ in *Brother*, Radley said:

[...] It hugs like a darling. Hugging. It is made for those—I don't know, I haven't searched for that—however, according to the book, those who have special needs, such as children with Down's syndrome. I mean people who are unable hug others. They are unable to hug anyone, but they also need this kind of feeling [...]. (*Brother*)

Here, Radley was suspicious about the information given in the book; however, her idea still relied on that information. While explaining hugging, she was opening her arms as if she were giving someone a big hug. This explanation was surprising for the other students because the "darling" was a novelty for them. The last sentence shows how she empathised with people who have this kind of disability. Her low and slow voice was an indication of how upset she felt about them. Nevertheless, her expression "I haven't searched for that, according to the book" was an indication that she did not perceive everything she read as 'fact' (Oatley, 1999a).

²¹ "Darling" is a special armchair's name that is designed especially for people who are unable to touch others due to their illness so that they can feel someone touching them.

The idea presented above is similar to Oatley's (1999a) suggestions that the information presented in fiction can be perceived as fact because of its simulative nature. If the information is accepted as fact, then this should lead to some emotional or cognitive reflections from the reader. This reflection would show the position of the reader towards the incidents depicted in the story. This position is also influenced by the narrative elements, especially the point of the view of the focalizer, through whose eyes readers see events. This may lead to identifying with the character, which Cohen (2006) describes as "feeling an affinity toward the character that is so strong that we become absorbed in the text and come to an empathic understanding of the feelings the character experiences, and for his or her motives and goals" (p.184). In the case of identification, the reader perceives the fictional experiences of the characters as if they were her own experiences (*ibid.*) Thus, Cohen finds that "identification is an important channel through which mediated messages affect our lives and the society in which we live" (*ibid.*, p.194).

Identification may become an issue in the case of crime fiction, where the main protagonist is a criminal because in this case, the fiction presents a behaviour that society does not approve of. Depending on the position the reader undertakes, he or she may become a supporter of the unfavourable behaviour presented in the text. As presented in Chapter 2, Nikolajeva (2014) suggests that "reading about extreme violence makes us spectators and silent accomplices" (p. 197) as the reader may not disapprove of the behaviour of the character with whom she identifies (Konijn and Hoorn, 2005). Arguably, being "silent accomplices" or 'spectators' is a possibility but not necessarily an outcome of reading that kind of fiction. When readers become 'spectators' (Britton, 1963), or 'onlookers' (Harding, 1968), they may refuse or accept the behaviour of the fictional character. However, according to research, "people apparently like to identify with their heroes" (Konijn and Hoorn, 2005, p.107). Laura E. Tanner (1994) investigates twentieth century fictional texts that present violence in a controversial manner by employing different theories such as reader response, feminist film theory, poststructuralist theory and Marxist theory. She argues that identification with the violent protagonist may lead an unsophisticated reader to misjudge the rape and perceive it as an acceptable action. Bearing this in mind, I wanted to investigate the students' perspective on this matter. In the *Sinner* reading sessions, I argued that reading the kinds of scenes that present murder

as an ordinary activity could “encourage murder” and may make readers more “combative” or “introverted.” Panther agreed up to a point by saying “it could reveal the wild nature of people.” However, Snowbird and Tess stressed that they became “happy” when they read these books. Radley thought, “in fact, it calms [her] down” and “provides a cool perspective,” which disagrees with what I had assumed (*Sinner*). Presumably, each claim held some truth about the effect of reading crime fiction, but this may depend on the reader and the book. However, their comments over the course of the discussion showed that it certainly provided them with an opportunity to imagine what kind of experience crime and murder were by empathising and identifying with the characters.

Coming back to Nikolajeva’s claim (2014) mentioned earlier, there were several occasions where the participants approved of murder and even became advocates of it:

Osman: Do you perceive this [murder] like an ordinary thing in a real-life situation too?

Radley: Yep.

Tess: Yes. It happens.

Snowbird: Yes.

Tess: Just an ordinary thing.

Radley: You may even like [the murder]; you sometimes smile.

Tess: If I think he [the killer] has got a valid reason, I say, fortunately, he did it [killed].

Snowbird: Yes! (*Sinner*)

The word choices they made such as “like,” “smile,” and “fortunately” are a sign that they are in favour of certain murders. Here, the discussion was not about an imaginary world; rather, it was about real-life situations. This is reminiscent of Cantor’s (2006) explanation about empathy: “[h]umans are also naturally inclined to empathise with the emotions of protagonists, especially those that they like and admire” (p. 320). In the case above, the students

empathize with fictional characters who commit a crime and they admit their approval of the characters' actions. Here, as Cantor claims, the admiration could be a reason for their approval or advocacy of murder. The advocacy of such actions is an important matter that needs to be investigated as according to Bandura and Walter's (1977) social learning theory, when someone admires a fictional character, he or she may want to be like that character.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Nikolajeva (2014) questions the way fictional text presents crime where it becomes "dubious" in "novice" readers' minds (p.201). Here, the readers were not ordinary readers as they were selected to study in one of the best schools in the city of Adana, which has a population of 2 million people. In addition, these were arguably among the keenest readers in the city, according to their survey responses. It may not make them avid readers, but considering the wide range of books and character references they made over the study, they were critical of what they read. Nevertheless, according to their responses, it seems that a crime can become "dubious" or even acceptable in their mind. It is hard to guess the result of sympathizing or identifying with the criminal. However, the conversation below gives a clue about it. Even though *Snowbird* describes the depiction of a man who is 'eating the organs' of the dead human as 'so beautiful', she seems to be being ironic or provocative. Even so, they did admire the cleverness of the murderer:

Snowbird: Oh! Those [Western] men are making a detailed plan before committing a murder.

Tess: Yes, they use their brains too.

Snowbird: If I were committing a murder, I would think about every single detail. I would even show off.

Radley: Exactly! I would show off, like *Sherlock* or *Hannibal* while such things are occurring.

[Laughter because Isfendiya is showing his discomfort]

Snowbird: You want to go. Don't you?

Osman: I got scared. [Laughter]

Radley: If you like this kind of book, definitely watch *Hannibal*.

Isfendiyar: Panther! Shall we go?

[Laughter]

Radley: He eats people in that [referring to *Hannibal*].

Snowbird: In fact, I like that too!

Isfendiyar: He kills a human just because he was rude. Then he eats his organs.

Snowbird: But that is so beautiful! Oh! [laughter].

[...]

Radley: If a child of that age [13] starts to read about this, or if these kinds of incidents start to draw attention, he starts to loathe it. I mean he cannot read it again.

Snowbird: Here, the character becomes involved in this. We are in the first option (*Sinner*).

Their approval of the killers' behaviour does not mean that they would approve similar incidents in real life too, but their word choice -even if seemingly ironic- brings some concerns. If they admire the murderer or the murder, would their behaviours be influenced if they experienced a similar incident with the fictional character in their daily lives or would they simply have the pleasure of this imaginative experience and not remember or consider this fictional experience at all? The discussion started with the comparison of Western fiction and Turkish fiction, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Some of the students blamed Turkish fiction for not being creative enough. They compared it to real life, and found Turkish murders (which were similar to those they read about in Turkish fiction) too simplistic. Then they started imagining themselves as killers because "our killers [are] not creative enough to kill very skilfully" (*Sinner*, Snowbird). It is not expected that those students would do what they imagined in this discussion. However, presumably, they wanted to show their perception of the lack of "creative" killers in Turkey and how they could fill in a

gap in this area if they wanted to. The incident they referred to above to in *Hannibal* was favoured by Snowbird, while Isfendiyar showed his feeling of repulsion for that. As Snowbird rightly pointed out, the “character” might have an effect on their attitude against extreme violence.

Empathising with the character led the participants to understand and feel the character’s thoughts and feelings. While they practised imagining themselves as killers above because of the identity of the main protagonist in *Sinner*, in *Heroin* they began to create suicide scenarios when they were talking about Dünya’s suicide:

Snowbird: If I were doing something like that, I would prepare something good for myself.

Radley: I know, right? It should be full of surprises.

Snowbird: It will be remembered, not forgotten.

Radley: I wouldn’t kill myself, I would run away. We watched a movie in class. The woman ran away very successfully, and people thought she passed away.

Both Snowbird and Radley seem to be influenced by the narratives they had read and watched. The readers used the subjunctive mood “if I were” on several occasions during the reading sessions. They asked questions to themselves and their peers using this mood to deepen their lived-through experience. Radley wouldn’t kill herself. Instead, she would make a plan like the woman in the movie. Remarkably, the idea that was directing her when she was escaping a conclusion drawn in one narrative came from another narrative. This was a way for her to plan her mysterious escape. According to Phillips (1985), the suicide of a fictional TV character may lead to similar deaths in the audience. Although Snowbird and Radley were only talking about death scenarios, which does not mean they were seriously thinking about them (Konijn and Hoorn, 2005), more studies are needed to understand the effects of fictional characters on viewers and readers.

In this section, I explored the possible influence of extremely violent scenes in fiction on young people. There was only one crime fiction work that was read

and discussed in the fieldwork in School 1, so the examples given are mostly from that reading session, although I have also provided examples from interviews and the sessions around *Heroin*. At the beginning, I stressed the close connection between the reader and the fictional characters. Then I tried to show how readers might adopt the behaviours of the characters. Finally, I wanted to touch on the possible negative effects of reading crime fiction, which could lead to perceiving criminals in positive light and their action (in this case murder) as an acceptable action. This raised questions about fictional criminals becoming misleading role models for some young readers. In the final section of this chapter, I will focus on readers' emotional reactions towards fictional characters.

6.5 Heartfelt Responses: Anger, Love and Empathy

In this section, I will examine the participants' emotional responses to the books. I will focus on two opposing extremes in the readers' responses, anger and disgust on one side and love and empathy on the other.

6.5.1 Readers Reacting with Anger and Disgust

On several occasions, participants showed anger towards characters or events. In the *Peace* discussions, in particular, the readers expressed their disapproval and disgust in relation to some of the ideas in the book. *Peace* is a popular work of fiction that depicts Islamic values through the eyes of a religious woman. In this book, the matter of wearing a headscarf is discussed between two characters. Wearing a headscarf in government institutions, including schools, was banned until 2013 (Resmi Gazete, 2013) and this topic has been a subject of heated debate in Turkey for a more than a half of a century (see Bleiberg, 2005; Gürbüz, 2009; Schleifer, 2008). In the discussions of *Peace*, it seemed that students from both groups were hesitant to speak about this matter as this could reveal religious perspectives and they could be criticised by their peers if they said something that others might not agree with. Another reason for this could be related to the religious and political issues in the country referred to in Chapter 6.2. In one scene in the story, while the characters are in a club, Selim starts swearing and biting his wife in front of other people because she refuses his request to stand beside him while he is gambling. The participants indicated their disapproval of Selim's behaviour but hesitated in going into detail:

Radley: Now here the one who shows a reaction is Selim, not Feyza.

Tess: Yes.

Radley: It is beastly behaviour.

It was when they read about one of the characters' strong beliefs about on wearing a headscarf in Islam that they started to reveal their own views on the matter. The book stresses the idea that the headscarf is an obligation in Islam and "every Muslim woman has to wear one if she is a real Muslim" (Şenler, 1977, p.162). This kind of authoritarian voice may not be welcomed by these readers and could work in the opposite way. Even before we started talking about the book, BookMonster said: "*Peace Street*! Ha ha! I have got strong ideas, shall I reveal them?" It seemed she had reservations about the book, as evidenced by her when her friend was presenting the summary:

BoiceLove: [...] Feyza does not want to wear a headscarf while Bilal wants to marry someone who wears a scarf. Then they meet anyway. Feyza's nanny says "this girl will spoil you, don't marry someone like that" to Bilal.

BookMonster: I mean, there is so much discrimination. Women with a headscarf and women without a headscarf. All of us are human. She could be covered to such a degree that only her eyes can be seen. The important thing is her personality.

BookMonster does not wear a headscarf, but she is not against wearing a scarf or any other type of dress. What sparked her reaction was the sentence she read, which she thought served to separate people. She was in favour of Feyza when talking about her husband's shouting and biting her. However, she "got angry" with the idea presented in the text that "women without a headscarf are like non-believers" (*Peace*). She gave examples from the book to show why she felt so upset:

For example, it says: "Muslims are brothers and sisters. They should help the whole community. As to the residents of the apartment, if they see you as someone who says her prayers and wears a headscarf, those jades would get very angry." Supposedly, when people who don't wear the

headscarf see the ones who wear it, [they say] oh this is the one with headscarf! [But they don't do that.] (*Peace*).

Because of this divisive feature, BoiceLove and BookMonster “didn’t like” the book (*Peace*). Radley and Snowbird also indicated their discomfort with reading expressions like “girls who do not wear the scarf.” None of these girls wore headscarves although some of their mothers or grandmothers did. When we read it, the girls in School 1 kept quiet. It seemed that they didn’t like the idea in the paragraph that presents two groups of women as opponents because of their religious apparel. I asked them about their opinions:

Osman: Do you think if this scene were read by a young girl who does not wear a headscarf, would it disturb her?

Radley: We should answer, I think [laughter].

Tess: It didn’t affect me.

Radley: I mean, I am very disturbed, to be honest.

Tess: I just thought it is absurd.

Radley: I mean when I read this unwillingly, I don’t know what; on the one hand, I agree, but on the other hand there is a fact, it is a fact, but I don’t want to accept it.

The word choices that Radley and Tess used such as “absurd,” “very disturbed,” “unwillingly” show how reading that paragraph made them uncomfortable, even though Tess said “it didn’t affect” her. The way the idea is presented in the text brought out opposing views because it sought to exclude Muslim women who do not wear a scarf. One of the students perceived it as “absurd” (*saçma*), which, according to the *Turkish Dictionary*, means “nonsense, inconsistent or foolish” (TDK online, 2016a). The other student found the idea “accurate” but not acceptable. The exclusion of Muslim women who do not wear the headscarf from a Muslim community caused objections from the students because this was a type of “discrimination” (*Peace*) that has been causing problems in Turkey for more than a half-century. The author of *Peace* is a well-known conservative who presents Islamic values in her works. However, in this example, the way she presents an Islamic value, the headscarf, was criticised by these young, highly

engaged readers because of its exclusionary perspective. Radley thought that the idea was accurate. However, the extremely strong emphasis and divisive attitude made her uncomfortable and caused her to object. Panther and Kdr, on the other hand, thought that the book should be evaluated according to the historical context at the time of its writing. After listening to his friends' criticisms, Kdr added:

Kdr: Oh! That's right, it should be evaluated according to the era.

Osman: Yes.

Kdr: 1970. That's why I asked about the year of publication. I also noticed the sentences (his friends were criticising the strong religious perspective taken by the author). We are, more or less, all conservative or believers, and we are aware that the idea was given too strongly. But because I read and researched about the ideas of that era to some degree, I know the majority of conservative people advocated this view.

BookMonster: It was, of course, just like that in the past. Elderly people and so on [experienced this].

Kdr: It is not related to being human or to discriminating against something. It is something that became the view of the era.

BoiceLove: Yep.

BookMonster: That's right. I've never thought according to that era.

[...]

BookMonster: Book incidents... There are many people who were killed because of the books found in their houses.

Kdr: Yes. (*Peace*)

Although BookMonster was seriously upset by the sentence that stressed Muslim women had to wear a headscarf, she seems to agree with Kdr that the author's word choices might have been influenced by the historical context. This can also be seen as peer influence on her as she found an acceptable reason for the author's approach.

Gender was another factor in the students' reactions. Male students who were not targeted directly by ideas in the texts showed more conservative attitudes, finding the attitude of the author of *Peace* "understandable" while students who were "othered" in the story as Muslim females who did not wear headscarves showed emotional reactions. However, the students who reacted to the paragraph indicated that their reaction was not because they oppose wearing or because they do not wear a headscarf; it was because there was "discrimination." BoiceLove could not even bear to finish the book because of the kinds of ideas presented in the text.

In his interview, Leonardo mentioned an action of a character, a killer from one of Dan Brown's books that he found "unnecessary": "I mean the man was unnecessary. It wasn't necessary to kill him. For example, he could have solved the issue by taking him hostage. I hated him". (Leonardo) Although Leonardo said "the man was unnecessary" at first, the rest of his talk revealed that he was against "unnecessary murder" when there was a more simple solution to the problem. Although I did not know which book he was talking about or the background of the event, it is obvious that he objected to the murder.

Another reaction to a fictional character was made during the discussions of *Prince*. In the example below, Leonardo related the incident between the Little Prince and the King to his argument with the school principal. In this case, he empathised with one of the secondary characters rather than the main protagonist:

Osman: So, you come across these incidents in real life, too. Have you felt like the child [the Little Prince]?

Leonardo: No, but I did react.

Osman: In fact, he is also reacting.

Leonardo: Oh! His reactions are very offensive. I don't like it now at all. I don't like the Little Prince at all.

[...]

Because it depends on the approach, I mean. [...] I am seriously annoyed. Oh! Why are you talking to the man like that?

BookMonster: To which man?

Leonardo: What is his name...

BoiceLove: The businessman.

Leonardo: To the businessman. Are you serious? I mean, the wrong attitude. Selfish, arrogant, piece of filth [everyone is laughing except Leonardo, who is continuing to speak seriously]. The man gave his 54 years, and only left [his business] three times. Firstly, respect him [...] (*Prince*).

Leonardo's reaction shows how a reader can become angry about a fictional character. He was angry with the Little Prince, using words that described his attitude was "selfish, arrogant, piece of filth" because he underestimated the businessman's venture, which was owning "millions of those little objects" (stars) and managing them (De Saint-Exupéry, 1998, p. 41). There was a discussion with the Little Prince where he tried to explain that the businessman had no use for the stars, and therefore there is no point in owning them. There was no mention that the businessmen felt upset about the Little Prince's attitude. They just had a conversation and then the Little Prince left him. This interruption was one of the three reasons that led the businessman to stop counting the stars for the rest of his life. The numbers Leonardo gave shows how he cared about the businessman's work. His reaction was also associated with his real-life experiences. In the following discussions, he mentioned some students who had underestimated what he read or did, something which made him very angry. Leonardo indicated that he became angry with the character but not the author, even though the author was the one who created the plot, because the story "would not be engrossing or would not catch [his] attention" without such a plotline.

It was not only the idea or events that drew a reaction from the readers, but also the characteristics of fictional characters. BookMonster "did not like" the main protagonist of *Paranormalcy* (by Kiersten White) as she was not "a powerful character" and "needed others all the time." Her dislike for the main character did not make her give up the book right away as she wanted to finish the trilogy, but it was "so hard" and she "quit at the second book"

(BookMonster). Similarly, Radley wanted to finish a work of fiction even though “she felt sick” while reading it. She did not even want to talk about the book or reveal the details that made her feel sick. Upon my insistence, she said: “There were too many man-woman relations and man-man relations.” The book is called *Passenger of Secret Moments (Gizli Anların Yolcusu)* by Ayşe Kulin. It tells the story of a married man who divorces his wife when she starts suffering from depression. Then he starts a relationship with another female but ends this relationship because he starts a homosexual relationship (Kulin, 2011). She “finished the book” because she had “an obsession” with finishing books and “she might have expected something good” at the end of the book. However, the way the relationships were presented in the story made Radley “put the book into the waste bin” after reading it. She had read the book between 6th and 8th grades. She thought that she “would have a similar reaction” if she read it in high school. She had read some other books by the same author and liked some of them very much, and she even “cried” while she was reading them even though those books also included “these kinds of events, but not overemphasised” (I, Radley). Presumably, Radley’s reaction was not towards the events but to the way they are presented in the book because she had read similar scenes from other books but did not react the same way. For example, she read *Brother*, in which a woman falls in love with another woman, but Radley loved this book and recommended it to her friends, perhaps because the women’s relationship was not at the centre of plot or depicted in detail.

The events in the works of fiction affected the readers in different ways. While one thing made some readers angry, the others laughed or did not manifest any negative feelings towards that particular event. The participants expressed anger differently and at different points in the reading depending on whether the text presented something contrary to what they believed in. According to Sipe and McGuire (2006), readers may resist reading certain books or certain content in books. Some readers’ emotional responses to stories discussed above such as “anger” and “feeling sick” towards to characters could be counted as such resistance. They argue that this kind of resistance could be because some scenes depicted in a realist story could be “too real” for young readers and therefore they “they resist paying attention to these distress-ing features of reality” (p.6).

6.5.2 Readers Expressing Love and Empathy

Just as the adolescent readers in the study could show anger in relation to fictional characters, they could also show their love. In some cases, this love was linked to sympathy, such as in Snowbird's reaction to Augustus in *Fault*. Her reaction was still fresh even though she had read the book some time previously: "Because his situation was worse... I didn't expect Augustus to die. Suddenly, I mean..." (*Fault*, Snowbird). Snowbird's tone of voice gives a hint about the extent to which this incident influenced her. When she said "I didn't expect Augustus to die," she suddenly increased her volume. Then in the next three words "Suddenly, I mean," she reduced her voice to a level that was difficult to hear, and then she did not complete the sentence. She stopped speaking and looked down at that moment. It would seem that recalling scenes from the book still had an emotional effect on her. She had first read this book about two years earlier, at night, when "everyone went to bed." Once she read the lines where Augustus's death is revealed, she could not stop herself from crying aloud. "Then I turned three or four pages back to keep him alive again. Then he died again. I turned back again, and then he died again." Then her mother woke up and came to her bedroom, asking, "Haven't you slept yet?" She responded to her mother in tears: "Mum, Augustus died." The reading time and place and the reader's mood might have also affected the degree of the influence. However, Snowbird's attempt "to keep him alive again" shows how upset she was at the time. Getting upset or crying during or after reading a fictional book is not unusual but the continuation of the feeling shows how important the character was for her. Another character she liked was Patch in *Hush*, *Hush* series by Fecca Fitzpatrick:

Osman: So you liked the Augustus character very much.

Snowbird: Yes, you like him, more than Hazel because of his entertaining manner.

Osman: Is there any other character you liked very much?

Snowbird: Yes. I liked the Patch character very much in the *Hush Hush* series.

Osman: Why?

Snowbird: Because he had a mysterious style, especially in the first book. I like biology class very much; it's my favourite class. The book started with biology class, and for this reason too, the book drags me inside the events. Also, she [the girl character] was saying that a new student came to the class; I don't know his name, and he leant back, sitting. At that moment, he took a place in my mind as a mysterious person. Then he started to follow the girl. He wears black all the time with a baseball hat and when she looks at him the second time he disappears. For example, I liked Patch very much. I told my mum about him [laughter]. I even drew his, Patch's, picture. (Snowbird)

Snowbird's two favourite male characters are Augustus and Patch: the first one is a realist character who has cancer, and the other one is an angel. Both characters are young and handsome; they are strong characters that have an influence on other fictional characters. The "mystery" of Patch "took a place" in Snowbird's mind and she drew a picture of him. Here, her emotional feelings about the characters were not because she found similarities between herself and the characters, but because the characters were attractive for her by being "entertaining" and "mysterious." BoiceLove, however, mentioned a female character as one of her favourites:

BoiceLove: A character I liked very much. I liked the girl in the *The Devil Wears Prada*.

Osman: What did you like about her?

BoiceLove: I mean, everything is not a job. She helped me to understand life. For this reason, she has got a special meaning for me. Or [she taught me that] success is not everything. (BoiceLove)

The reason she liked her so much was different from the reason Snowbird had for liking a character. While Snowbird's were more emotional ones, BoiceLove's reasons relied on the character's help with understanding life. This was similar to Isfendiyar's reasoning about being a good role model:

Isfendiyar: Elif Shafak's book [*The Forty Rules of Love*] was beautiful.

Osman: Yes. What do you think was important for you in that book?

Isfendiyar: I mean, how can I say it, even a prostitute started to follow the right path. (Isfendiyar)

The protagonist of the book, Shams of Tabriz, helps a girl who prostitutes herself and wants to get rid of the horrible life she has got into. His wise words and practicality help the girl change her life, and she escapes the evil people who use her body. The scene where he saves the girl gives a lesson about not being prejudiced towards any person, regardless of their job and social status (Shafak, 2011). Shams's approach to the girl influenced Isfendiyar and became an important reason for his love of the book. Isfendiyar's recollection of this scene tells something about the resolution of issues presented in chapter 2, especially those related to prejudice and intolerance.

When the interaction starts between the reader and the text, the reader starts empathising with one of the characters, and the character's gender, age, and cultural background affect the choice (Nikolajeva, 2014). In *Ship*, the readers looked at the events through the eyes of a child protagonist who was a victim, and this encouraged empathy with him (Aytmatov, 2014). The readers' emotional attachment to the story became visible on several occasions:

Radley: Was the child crying?

Panther: [Yes, he was crying] when they were eating lunch and they were waiting at the corner. He was influenced. He even became sick. It is very sad. Then he leaves.

Radley: I was very emotional at that moment. (*Ship*)

Radley had read the book sometime before the study took place while Panther chose to read it during the study. Radley was trying to recall the scene with the help of Panther. Panther used the present tense when he was expressing his feelings. Considering his gestures and facial expression, arguably, the effect was still fresh. Radley was also "very emotional" about the scene where the child discovers that Maral Ana was killed by his grandfather and they are eating her meat. However, she used past tense. Thus, it is possible to say that she was influenced but the impact had somewhat diminished by the time of the session. She was still interested in the matter, asking whether the child cried when he saw the incident, and when she heard the answer with the details from the story,

she expressed the feelings she had had at the time of reading. The reason for Radley's question is unknown, but it may be seen as a demand for recalling a pleasurable and/or emotional moment; once she found the answer she was looking for, she showed her reaction.

I myself experienced a strong emotional reaction upon reading the story as I was travelling home from the Anatolian School on a bus. Even though I had read it when I was in university and I was on public transport, it left me in tears when I came towards the end. The innocence, desperation, and frustration of the six-year-old child echo in the reader's heart, and this leads to an emotional reaction. It reminds the reader of his/her own childhood and helps to develop empathy with children. When discussing the story, we had to refer to childhood psychology and understanding children's behaviour several times. I noticed that after the reading sessions, I took off my researcher identity and wore my father identity because it made me think about my attitude towards my daughter. After reading the story, I had more empathy towards her behaviour.

6.5.3 Section Conclusion

In conclusion, the interaction between the reader and the text clearly leads to different forms of emotional influence on the reader, whether it is anger or love. Depending on the reader and the book, reactions can reflect different levels of strength of emotion, sometimes leading to an admiration for the characters that turns them into role models. MagicBookmark provides an imaginative and sensitive understanding of this emotional interactive process that is a fitting end to this section:

Of course, I get angry with the characters. Even though the book looks like something without a soul, even though it is made of black words written down on the paper, it is not like that in my perspective. The characters have a spirit. When you turn the pages, you feel their breathing. When you read the book, those words turn into big shapes. Then this lifeless thing, it's not like that anymore. When something has got a soul, you react to its behaviours. When it affects you, you react involuntarily. When I see the things that the protagonist experiences, I get upset, angry, or cry if it is effective.

6.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provides extracts from the data that reveal a telling glimpse of the interaction between reading fiction, readers' inner worlds, and the result of this interaction. The sections focused on some key aspects of reader-text interaction: memories of previous reading; visual responses; the development of empathy and ToM skills; the effects of reading certain fiction genres and emotional reactions to fictional lives and the authorial voice. If we compare fiction to a medicine that circulates through the veins in all parts of the body, depending on the characteristics of the medicine and the body, sometimes it damages certain parts of the body and sometimes cures them. However, this is not a one-way effect. To take this metaphor further, the medicine itself is transformed as it goes through. This refers to the transaction that takes place between the two subjects, the book and the reader, which transforms both of them in some way. This interaction also corresponds to the idea presented in Chapter 2, which is that books can have an influence on habit forming through the reader's encounter with them.

Likewise, this chapter shows how readers can be affected in various ways by the texts they read. In the cases described above, the texts added to their awareness of social problems and self-awareness gave them the opportunity to experience what others experience in real life. In this way, they had the chance to develop their empathy and ToM skills. In the previous chapter I discussed how the readers were affected by a number of external factors in their reading choices and habits; in this chapter I focused on how readers act upon texts they read. This is where readers have power. This power that was not formed by the factors (such as publishers, politicians, adverts, friends, teachers, and parents) that had influence before the readers encountered the text. Rather, it was the power that readers gained by reading, enjoying, criticizing, and reflecting upon the texts, as well as by sharing their thoughts with each other.

This chapter also showed that, contrary to Nikolajeva's argument about novice readers (2014), these readers did not actually become 'spectators' or 'silent accomplices' while reading the texts they mentioned, but they looked at the incidents with critical eyes and did not necessarily sympathize with the characters and approve their behaviours. This may be because, these readers do

not fit the definition of novice readers that Nikolajeva offers (2014, 16-17) because they demonstrated skills with which to judge characters' behaviours (Harding, 1968), the ability to compare real life and fictional life and relatively well-developed attention skills. They also did not give similar responses to texts but underlined different aspects by bringing their individual backgrounds to the text.

Coming back to Currie's (1995) argument about the possible negative effect of fiction when the reader uses 'secondary imagining' (Section 2.2.2), these readers showed how successfully they used their imagination in filling the textual gaps. Despite their relatively strong imagination (as in *Heroin* discussions) and despite their identification with the characters in some cases (as in Leonardo's identification with a Sociopath) the texts they read did not seem to cause 'moral damage' to these readers (Currie, 1995), but rather helped them to better understand others (for example people who are addicted to illegal drugs) and themselves.

The digital age raises some questions about what happens with the readers' power when fiction is encountered online rather than in printed books. In order to see the effect of online stories, the next chapter will focus on the online reading habits of adolescent readers in Turkey; in particular, it will analyse Wattpad as an e-reading platform for young readers.

7. Online Reading Practices of Adolescent Readers in Turkey and Wattpad as an E-Reading Medium

This chapter²² will focus on e-reading, in particular online reading, rather than reading of print-based e-books²³. This chapter will help to unpack understandings of how the reading opportunities offered in the virtual world can affect reading practices of adolescent readers in Turkey, which was one of the research questions to be addressed in this thesis. To achieve this goal, it will first sketch out a picture of changes in reading modes with the development of digital technologies. Then it will focus on the popular online site, Wattpad where young people read, write, share and review online stories. The activities of reading-writing-sharing-reviewing will be referred to as rewshare in this thesis. I will try to explain how participants used this site as a reading medium and how this affected them. It will conclude with a review of two Wattpad stories, *Kötü Çocuk (The Bad Boy)* by Büşra Küçük and *Yabancı (The Stranger)* by Öznur Yıldırım, and matters related to the latter text's rewshare process, and will include a discussion of the reasons and consequences of this online process. It will be done through a content analysis of reader reviews of each story, framed by a methodology that will be described in this chapter.

7.1. Changes in the Reading Mode, E-Reading Culture

Electronic publishing became possible in the 1960s (Lancaster, 1995) and has increased every year but particularly from the beginning of the 1990s. The advancement of computer and telecommunication technology has added to this change with the result that electronic reading has become an important part of literacy practices in most global North countries. E-reading and e-publishing were triggered by Amazon's Kindle in 2007, then by tablets and widescreen smartphones, and then the Android and IOS systems that can support various tools for e-reading (Lamb, 2011).

²² A part of this chapter appeared in the Second International Children's and Youth Literature Symposium Proceedings, Turkey, 2015.

²³ By print-based e-books, I mean the e-books that are already printed on a paper by a publisher and then published as an e-book or distributed in electronic form as well. For example e-book versions of *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The above technologies have helped especially with the spread of printed books in the electronic medium. Social media tools have also played a part in the increase of e-reading opportunities. In particular, young people who have been able to keep up with the pace and cost of these technologies have begun to use technology for their daily leisure and educational activities. Among the many social media sites are those that focus mainly on reading and publishing such as *RandomBuzzers* and *TwilightSaga* (for encouraging the reading of certain serials and publishers), *Teen Ink*, *Fanfiction*, *Quotev* and *Wattpad* (for rewwshare). Although the main focus of common social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter is not reading of literature, according to research, young readers may use social networking sites to exchange book reviews and suggestions (Pitcher et al. 2007).

With the opportunities provided by digital technologies, in the 1990s, young readers started to create their own stories in user-owned sites and blogs. Publishers had to move from traditional methods of promoting and advertising books into the emerging online spaces. Conventional marketing strategies such as leaflets, posters, newspaper and TV adverts became less efficient for the new generation whose interest changed quickly according to the fluid possibilities of the virtual world. Some publishers tried to reach their young targets by generating sites that involved them in reading and marketing. Random House, for example, created the site called *RandomBuzzers.com* in which users were rewarded for engaging in marketing activities. The publisher aimed to promote more books through rewards such as posters and books signed by authors and provided the opportunity for readers to communicate with the author. As the online opportunities of writing and reading continued to develop through the appearance of new sites and social media tools, Random House has recently transformed the site into *figment.com*, which now focuses mainly on reader-generated stories rather than the promotion of Random House authors' own published stories (Martens, 2016). The function of this site is similar to Wattpad. The difference is that the former is owned by a publisher and was created for a commercial purpose at first, while no publisher has been involved in the latter and the content is entirely peer-generated (Martens, 2016). Some libraries have also tried to adapt to this new reading medium and tried to attract readers' attention by enabling them to post online book reviews or by linking their content to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Martens, 2016).

7.2. Wattpad as a Popular E-Reading Site in Turkey

There are several rewwshare sites that have increased the possibility for the younger generation to be able to self-publish and also to read from the screen. The books published on these sites are usually fan-fiction,²⁴ a form which is different from the print-based e-books. The sites have significant numbers of followers from all over the world. Among the others mentioned above, according to the results of the current study, Wattpad is the most popular rewwshare site used in Turkey. The site has spread globally since 2007 when the first story was published (Nawotka, 2013). According to site data, there were about 40 million members and 100 million Wattpad stories in 2015 (Wattpad, 2015a), but by June 2017, the number of members was approximately 45 million, sharing over 300 million stories. The site has served in more than 50 languages, and 90% of total usage is via mobile devices (Wattpad, 2017a). It has encouraged users to write stories by asking them to promise other users that they will write ten thousand words in one month (Wattpad, 2015b), serves a means of increasing the engagement of new users.

The main function of Wattpad is to turn storytelling and reading into a social experience (Wattpad, 2017a) which is different from those on any of the other social media sites. With the social space that the site creates, Wattpad can be the first step for many young authors whose books may be published after becoming popular on this site. There are many examples of published works in both Turkish and English (Aktaş Salman, 2015; Wattpad, 2017b) which are no longer available on Wattpad because the rights have since been bought by publishers. In Turkey, more than 30 Wattpad stories were published in print by 2015 (Aktaş Salman, 2015). In addition to this, the site encourages published writers to use Wattpad to communicate with their readers, to get feedback from them and to promote their new works (Wattpad, 2017b). Wattpad also makes recommendations according to the type of story the reader chooses to read when they register. These Wattpad lists, in addition to reader comments, likes and suggestions, played a significant role in launching *The Stranger*, the novel which will be discussed below.

²⁴ 'fan-created texts that are derived from popular media' (Black, 2008, 2)

As in other social media tools, Wattpad users can hide their real identities and share any information/thoughts/emotional reactions with only a few restrictions. Some users wish their identity to be unknown when they read stories and reveal their feelings about them. The reason for this could be Turkey's cultural norms which do not allow the sharing of certain emotional and sexual desires and sexual experiences. *Twilightssaga.com* also did not allow its users to share sexual content on the site, warning them when they did this by sharing their own or the characters' 'virgin' status (Martens, 2016, 140). Even if it is hard to decide what to keep private and what to share and it will vary from culture to culture and age to age, revealing private emotions and personal identity could cause problems for these relatively novice users. As Kietzmann and his colleagues (2011) argue, 'Striking a careful balance between sharing identities and protecting privacy' is important for these young readers, because 'the wrong mix can lead to a lack of accountability among users, encourage cyber-bullying, and pave the way for off-topic and off-color comments' (244).

To have a better understanding of the Wattpad Turkish Page, it is also important to look at the content of texts shared on this site about which Büşra Uğraş (2015) raises her concerns in a popular newspaper article. She writes that the theme of the most popular books on the Wattpad page is a love relationship between young people where the boy is handsome, rich, rebellious and popular and psychopathic, while the girl is innocent, beautiful and completely falls in love with him. According to Uğraş, the stories are 'too romantic' and sometimes depict violent scenes (p. 1) and she refers to the work of Neslim Doksat, who focuses on the adolescent psychiatry, that says that these young people can actualize their utopias and feelings of aggression indirectly through reading and writing about them. Doksat thinks that this indirect actualizing process may lead readers to copy them in their real lives (in Uğraş, 2015). This idea, however, contradicts with the perspective of 'fiction as safe place' as discussed in Chapter 6 that suggest that readers can experience things that they would not be able to experience safely by providing a 'simulation' of real life (Johnson et al., 2013; Oatley, 1999b). Although there is no empirical evidence to Doksat's claims, they overlap some Western concerns about online reading spaces (Merga, 2015b) and studies about how readers' perceptions may change after reading a fictional text (Oatley, 1999a and b).

Another aspect of reading romance is stressed by Janice Radway (1984), according to whom, the effects of reading romance on the daily lives of female readers are unknown as they are not being quantified. However, it 'provides a vicarious experience of emotional nurturance and erotic anticipation and excitement' (p. 115). As will be analyzed below, the reader responses to the incidents in *The Stranger* showed how reading some scenes aroused readers' emotional excitement.

Despite critiques of the similarities between the plots of the stories shared on the Wattpad Turkish Page, young readers still like reading these stories. According to Meltem Erkmén, publishing director of Epsilon Publishing in Turkey, the reason for their desire to read them is that 'young people understand each other's language, style, expectations and dreams very well, therefore they can communicate well with each other.' (Al Jazeera, 2015). This communication has led to the creation of a community of readers supported by the reader reviews. The reasons for participating in the re-share sites include this sense of belonging to a community but also have to do with the pleasure of reading and writing, peer pressure, getting information, creating a new social medium, rising a fame or earning money (these will be seen in the readers' comments analyzed below). Interestingly, Abigail de Kosnik (2009) claims that in addition to emotional satisfaction and a sense of belonging to a reading community that consists of 'fellow writers and readers' (p. 123), some female readers, generally, might be aiming to gain some financial profit from writing in this kind of mediums.

Being in an age group similar to that of the story characters and therefore experiencing similar issues in real life is another reason for young readers' engagement with the Wattpad stories. Female readers, in particular, have created several fan pages in the name of male story characters. Male readers have very rarely engaged in a discussion on the pages with the result that there are only a few male authors among more than 30 authors who have become well-known through the Wattpad Turkish page. Although the low literary quality of stories has been criticized (Uğraş, 2015), they have succeeded in competing with established print works in terms of popularity without having the power of mainstream media support. This is an exciting encouragement for potential authors who want to publish their works and become well-known.

Although Wattpad has not yet become an area of research in Turkey, there are a couple of studies that mention Wattpad's functions and its popularity among adolescents (Yalçın, 2015). In fact, neither reading stories in online platforms or e-book reading habits in general have been taken into account by scholars or educators. Even a recent version of a Turkish dictionary, has not defined the terms e-book or electronic book (ekitap, e-kitap or elektronik kitap) (TDK Online, 2016b).

In my doctoral study, Wattpad was not a focus at first as indicated in Chapter 1, but after the participants' responses to questions about e-book reading habits, it became apparent that Wattpad was a popular site and warranted a closer look. The questionnaire results link Wattpad usage and e-book reading habits even more clearly. Among 311 of the 361 students who responded to the questionnaire, 35% of boys and 57% of girls indicated that they read e-books. However, about the two-third of female participants found reading e-book less enjoyable than reading printed books, while slightly more than a half of the males found reading e-book more enjoyable. In the questionnaire, they were also asked to provide a title of an e-book they read: 23 males and 74 females provided a title. These books can be divided into two categories: 1) print-based e-books (such as classics) and 2) e-books that have been shared on rewwshare sites such as Wattpad. Only four males provided the title of e-books in the second category compared to 55 out of 74 female readers. Even if the number of total respondents to this question was low, the results of this study are consistent with the previous research that shows female dominance in the use of Fanfiction sites (Walker, 2017).

7.3. An Analysis of Two Sample Stories from Wattpad Turkish Page

According to the questionnaire responses, two Wattpad stories were read more than others: *Kötü Çocuk (The Bad Boy)* by Büşra Küçük and *Yabancı (The Stranger)* by Öznur Yıldırım. Küçük began to write her story in January 2013 when she was 18 years old, and as the story became more and more popular, Ephesus Publishing published it in print in 2015 as a series of three books. The books sold more than 300 thousand copies and stayed on the bestsellers list in Turkey for several weeks. The author had several offers for film scenarios, and eventually, *The Bad Boy* was adapted for the screen in January 2017 (Barış,

2017). However, the film was not as successful as the Wattpad series. The novel had been viewed approximately 170 million times on Wattpad before being published (Doğan, 2016), while the movie had only 1.9/10 rankings on IMDB (IMDB, 2017).

Küçük's story is about a 17-year-old girl and her relationship with her schoolfriend Meriç. Both characters have problematic parents. Kayla's father abandons her mother before even she was born. Meriç's father cheats on his mother and Meriç witnesses this and his mother's traumas. Therefore both characters become introvert. Meriç is a tough, rough and rude boy, but Kayla falls in love with him. Meriç likes drawing and he wins an inter-school competition with a drawing of Kayla's portrait. They start living together, but it brings some other troubles to them because of Meriç's previous fights with some other tough guys.

The story did not bring fame only for herself but also for a Brazilian blogger and model Vini Uehara. Küçük used Uehara's portrait photographs, without his permission, to illustrate her imaginary character, Meriç, on the Wattpad site (Barış, 2014a). Uehara did not find out until Küçük emailed him but instead of suing her for breach of copyright, he thanked her in an interview with a Turkish newspaper:

I had a modest Instagram account. Suddenly, thousands of Turkish girls started to like my photos and to write 'Büşra, Kayla, Meriç, Kayriç' under my photos. Then I understood that I was loved in Turkey. I came here; the fans were jumping on me and screaming 'Meriç'. I was surprised. I thank Büşra. She changed my life (Barış, 2017).

Uehara was invited to an exhibition by a famous jeans brand where he met his many Turkish fans (Barış, 2014b). According to Barış (2014a and b), readers were confused about meeting an imaginary character but then realized that Uehara was a living person and had a real life, unlike Meriç who lived in their imaginations. It is perhaps the only situation where a real person has risen to fame due to a fictional character he knows nothing about.



Figure 7. 1 Turkish Readers' Excitement of Meeting with a Fictional Character: Model Vini Uehara's Istanbul Visit

(Barış, 2014b)

Yıldırım was 17, a year younger than Küçük, when she started writing *The Stranger*, and was studying at high school in 2013. She continued writing her book over a two year-period, and her viewings reached over 120 million and had just over 2 million likes in 2015. She had written 47 chapters when a well-known publishing house that targets young readers, Pegasus Publishing House, decided to publish it as a series. The first book was published in 2016 and the second in February 2017.

It is important to note that the book (*The Stranger*) is not as popular on social media as it used to be when it was first shared on Wattpad. There are no new fan pages for the book, and none of the three Facebook groups under the main character's name has been active since the last post in July 2016. The one used the most is controlled by the page admin and in contrast to the other reader generated groups; no one is allowed to post anything. Those who like the page can only like, dislike or make comments on the posts. This Facebook group has been used less than the previous groups that were opened before the publication. Therefore, readers seemed to be less excited to share posts about the story after the publication.

The main characters in this book are two young people, Ediz and Doğa. Ediz is a handsome and muscular boy with “grass green eyes”. He is the son of a successful lawyer who was killed by Atalay Gungor, Doğa's brother. Ediz decides to shoot Doğa in revenge for the murder of his father, but when his plan does not succeed, he kidnaps her. Ediz is described as a tough, macho and handsome boy, while Doğa is an 18-year-old, introverted girl who likes reading and listening to music. Ediz treats Doğa harshly, but this treatment is welcomed by both Doğa as it adds to her love for Ediz and, seemingly, also by some readers, judging by comments on the site that they would desire similar treatments from Ediz for themselves. Other readers, however, were more critical and one suggests that reading this book is a waste of time because it depicts sexual harassment as an ordinary thing and underestimates the value of women (Kitap, 2016). Over the course of the story, Ediz's actions are at the centre of the plot, while Doğa is a less powerful character who accepts Ediz's hegemony and his authority. There are similarities between *The Bad Boy* and *The Stranger* as both are about love relationships and empowering the men. Nevertheless, these two books became popular among young readers in Turkey. Readers' excitement about these books become visible in their reviews of the incidents depicted in the stories. These reviews, or reader responses in other words, contain the meaning that readers brought to the text. Therefore, even though these reviews are for an online text which is different from the texts discussed in the previous chapter, they will still help to understand the effect of reading fiction because of emerging from the interaction between the text and the reader. Having described the stories and their popularity I will now outline my methodology on analysing the reader reviews of *The Stranger*.

7.3.1. Methodology for the Analysis of Reader Reviews about *The Stranger*:

In order to understand readers' feelings and thoughts about *The Stranger* and the nature of the online reader reviews of the story, I randomly selected 2000 reviews from different pages out of over 800.000 reviews for the analysis. To explore the nature of the reviews, a qualitative content analysis method has been applied described by Tesch (1990) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The reviews have been categorised according to themes that are emerging from them. Through this conventional approach language and content of the reviews have been analysed rather than the number (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). There

were two reasons for choosing the conventional content analysis method. Firstly, it allowed discovering all possible themes that could emerge from the reviews. Secondly, it has been found to be appropriate for qualitative analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The majority of the reviews looked like emotional reactions to story characters and incidents, rather than book reviews or critics. The categories that emerged from the reviews are these and I will provide examples for each of these:

1. Reactions to the incidents or characters' attitudes.
2. Messages to the author (likes, critics, questions and requests)
3. Predictions or expectations about the course of events
4. Discussions and arguments between the readers
5. Readers' promotion of their books

7.3.2. Reactions to the Incidents or Characters' Attitudes

The most common type of response was an emotional reaction to incidents or characters. Many readers expressed their feelings (such as admiration, hate, anger and love) about the characters freely: 'Oh my God! I'm mad about this Ediz, this Doğa and this book!' (blueeyes77, 2015). Some of the comments directly remarked on the physical features of the characters, in particular, the male character. Comments made by a significant number of female readers showed how they were 'crazy' about Ediz's 'grass green' eyes and muscular body. Some of these comments manifested a sexual desire for Ediz, such as the following comment which shows how a readers' desire of the character increased as she read the story: "In the name of God' at the beginning of the book, 'I'm consumed by the passion for Ediz' at the end" (ilfenlae, 2015). The reader indicated that she started the book with an Islamic expression, 'Bismillah', by referring the name of God. This means that she had a religious attitude at the beginning. However, as she read the story, the portrayal of the character and his behaviour led the development of an emotional or arguably sexual reaction towards the character. In other words, she abandoned the Islamic moral values she kept in mind while starting the story as she began to desire the fictional character.

Emotions were also present in more general comments such as the following:

The book cover has changed, I think I will cry for this :)) I will restart the story, and I can read it again and again relentlessly just to live through everything again. Thank you for giving us an utterly different world and dreams that we won't get tired of imagining even if know that we won't realize them (CikolataMelegi, 2015).

I restarted reading the book, and my heart is skipping a beat (Freeglie, 2015).

While waiting for new chapters to be released, as some of them took long time because of the author's exam preparations, some readers indicated that they had read the story several times without diminishing their excitement. Although they enjoyed reading the story repeatedly, when the author did not write a chapter for a long time, they started to become critical of the author as will be discussed later in this chapter.

7.3.3. Messages to the Author (Likes, Critics, Questions and Requests)

Comments that addressed the author included messages of admiration and acknowledgement and some stressed the importance of the author for Turkish Literature (Cylnhzr, 2015). Besides this, the readers who were also interested in writing books on Wattpad asked the author questions about how she wrote the story, how she created the book cover, pictures and videos that she used at the beginning of each chapter. These messages or reviews did not actually offer critical feedback about the author's work but showed readers' emotional engagement with the story and the author. Magnifico et al. (2015) found similar results in their analysis of reader reviews on FanFiction.net and Figment.com, indicating the need for teachers' proficiency in advancing young people's critical evaluation skills.

7.3.4. Predictions or Expectations about the Course of Events

Another type of common comment included predictions and expectations about the course of events during the writing of the series. Sometimes the author did not write any chapters for a couple of weeks due to her personal circumstances such as illness and university entry exams. Over this period, some readers re-read the story several times from the beginning and because of the long waiting

time, they started creating scenarios about what the following chapter could/should be. As the author continued to write, some readers did not like the scenarios that were different from their predictions about their beloved characters.

7.3.5. Discussions and Arguments between the Readers

The reasons for discussions and arguments emerging between the readers were varied, such as liking/disliking an incident or character, different predictions about the course of events and criticism of the author even as she was writing. One of the biggest arguments erupted when the author did not deliver a chapter on the day she had promised to do so. Some readers waited until the early hours of the following morning with the expectation that she would produce it, but she neither delivered nor gave any notice to her readers. While some criticized Yıldırım's attitude and expressed their deep regret about reading her book, other readers defended her and tried to find a reasonable explanation for the missing chapter. In another incident, one reader accused Yıldırım of stealing the plot from another author and this made a significant impact on the community but the reader received a backlash of criticism and eventually, the author was cleared (Rabi4KubrANur, 2015).

Another argument developed when a publisher bought the publishing rights to the book, and the story was removed from Wattpad. There were both negative and positive reactions to this sudden and unexpected incident. The negative ones stressed the fact that books were expensive and therefore it would be difficult for some readers to buy the book. They backed up their concern in their comments by mentioning the name of the publisher of other Wattpad stories which sold the books at a high price. Another negative reaction had to do with the social aspect of reading online: some readers were upset because they thought they would not be able to share their thoughts with the other readers about a particular page or chapter as they read from a printed book. For these readers, the interactive opportunities that online reading offered made it superior to reading from printed books. The central point of the positive comments was that reading from a printed book would be more pleasurable than reading from the screen. Also, they indicated that it would make them happy to see an e-book that they liked reading on the bookshelves as a printed book. Finally, printing this book meant the author, who was one of those young

Wattpad readers/writers herself, was recognized by ‘serious’ publishers. This was an encouragement for them as perhaps one day their books would also be printed and they would become recognized authors too (Börekçi, 2015).

Another group of comments was related to the formation of the fan community and may have had the effect of exerting peer pressure on those who had not read it. For example, one of the fans of the book asked: ‘I really wonder if there is anyone who has not heard about this book?’ (hayalperestmelek, 2015). Upon reading this question, one of the new readers of the story responded, feeling guilty: ‘I didn’t know about it until 10 minutes ago. I apologize to everyone!’ (FKK223, 2015). She was underestimating those who had not heard about the book as if this was a masterpiece and everyone had been talking about it. It is obvious that discussions created a sense of belonging but also excluded those who did not read the story. Comments like ‘Those who don’t read *The Stranger* are not one of us!’ (hayalperestmelek, 2015) shows the signs of this exclusion.

7.3.6. Readers’ Promotion of Their Books

The final category of the reader comments included attempts by readers to promote their own books. Those who had recently begun to write on Wattpad, invited other readers to their own stories (Can you rate my last story please :) (buskrdmn, 2015) These ‘spam comments’ did not succeed much because readers focused on the story rather than this kind of ‘advertisement messages’. However, when the suggestion was made by a friend with excitement rather than an unknown person, an author of a Wattpad story, it helped the story spread to more new readers:

Let’s see what this book is, everyone is crazy about! (Onlybblack, 2015)

‘My friend suggested, I’m gld she did! Very bituful!’ (sic) (ghdygvv, 2015)

It seems that the first reader wanted to read with the influence of other readers around her. They may not have suggested the story, but their ‘craziness’ about it dragged her to start reading it. As also discussed in the previous chapter sharing the excitement of reading functioned as a way of spreading the love of reading and a book.

7.3.7. Chapter Conclusion

The Stranger clearly held an important place in the real and virtual lives of these young people, particularly girls as evidenced by these reviews as well as by t-shirts with Ediz's name on it, fan pages, social media pages and groups, the love messages that were shared on these pages and the fictional character's words widely shared on these pages. These emotional expressions also reveal the strong effect of this e-story on the socialisation of these readers. The story made a similar effect with other adolescent bestsellers such as the *Harry Potter* or the *Twilight* series by leading social participation around books (Scharber, 2009). This social engagement means that these books, in this way, are contributing to the popular culture of youth (Nieuwenhuizen, 2001). However, neither this common rewire process and its social aspect nor its possible benefits for the young generation have been considered in the Turkish curriculum yet as mentioned in Chapter 2. According to Margaret Merga (2015a), such active engagement with books or online texts on social media and self-publishing sites, 'supports the achievement of traditional literacy goals'. This is because, this kind engagement helps 'establishing a reading habit and motivation to engage in reading, social networking around books' (p. 3). The reader reviews suggest that the rewire process contributed to their self-motivation for reading *The Stranger* and led them to make suggestions for their peers.

Although the dominant gender of the users was female, not enough data is available to determine what type of readers read this kind of popular romance story. There is also insufficient data about the numbers of participants who enjoyed engaging in the entire rewire process. According to Margaret Merga's research (2015a), 'infrequent readers' are more actively engaged in social networking about books and reading than 'frequent readers' (p. 1) among which the ones who used the most are the ones who engaged in rewire sites. However, her focus was on West Australian adolescent readers, therefore the result of her study is likely to be different to the current study.

In conclusion, rewire culture among adolescents has been spreading in Turkey in the recent decade. This spread, on the one hand, offers the young readers a chance to develop their reading and writing skills, on the other hand, it brings some concerns about writing and publishing in a relatively uncontrolled

environment. Considering the previously mentioned studies that suggest young readers are affected by the fictional stories even if they knew the story is imaginary (Djikic et al., 2009; Kaufman and Libby, 2012; Nell, 1988), there is a need for long-term and interdisciplinary studies to investigate the effects of rewwshare sites on these young readers and to find out in what way these sites can be used more effectively in school. The concerns about the possible harms of reading from the screen remain (Merga, 2015b), however, as the younger generation spend more time on the screen and social media sites, the question of how the rewwshare sites can be used for the younger generation to develop reading habits/skills should also be investigated. Such engagement and influence was a big surprise for me as a researcher, because firstly, I had not heard of this site before reading the questionnaire responses. Secondly, when I was teaching in Turkey, none of my students mentioned this site as it was a less popular site in 2011.

This chapter has contributed to my inquiry about the effects of reading fiction by covering the effects that occur through readers' interaction with the virtual world. It has focused on the rewwshare process which includes writing, sharing and reviewing, aspects that were not dealt with in the previous chapters. However, these are, again, the type of responses to what they have read which connects these readers to the participants of the current case study, because in both cases, the responses were tools for readers' active creation of the text. In the next chapter, I will try to explain what all these responses may mean and give my concluding thoughts.

Chapter 8 Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

In this final chapter, I will discuss my findings and their potential implications for a wider practice inside and outside of school for teachers, librarians, and researchers in Turkey, within the areas of promoting and understanding adolescent reading, literary education, and developing awareness and respect for others. I will also reflect critically on some of the limitations of this study. This chapter will be structured according to the research questions that were formulated at the beginning of the study. It is important to state at the outset that this study centred round a small sample of avid readers, so the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population; however, this group was representative of a generation growing up in a typical microcosm of Turkey that is comparable to many other similar communities in Turkey. I also cannot generalize the findings to all young readers around the world, but the findings do offer a glimpse into the world of avid adolescent readers in Turkey, which I would not imagine is a very different situation for other avid readers.

8.1 What Kinds of Texts Do Adolescents Read, and What are the Factors that Affect Their Reading and Reading Choices?

8.1.1 Adolescent Readers Liked Reading Contemporary Fiction Books more than Classics, and Western Books were Preferred over Turkish Ones.

According to the questionnaire responses (see Chapter 4), adolescent readers in the city of Adana like reading Western fiction more than Turkish fiction. Three-quarters of the respondents identified a Western fiction title as their favourite book, as opposed to the one-quarter who selected Turkish titles. These Western books were predominantly contemporary popular fantasy fiction such as *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight* while the Turkish titles included both modern and classic works of fiction that were more realist books compared to the Western fantasy titles. These findings support Kutay's findings (2014) in terms of young people's favourable attitude towards Western fiction, but also contribute to knowledge by explaining the reasoning for this attitude. It was because they did not find contemporary Turkish authors very creative, as discussed in Chapter 5.

8.1.2 Powerful Gatekeepers Affected the Choices of These Young Readers by Deciding Which Books and What Content to Publish and Popularize.

There was one aspect that I did not really consider in-depth in the questionnaire, but which became more apparent upon reading and discussing the books: the notion of powerful gatekeepers. Two areas of gatekeeping emerged from the discussions (see Chapter 5), one of which was about production and the other of which was about marketing. The first one implies an ideological power that affects the decisions of what kind of books to publish and what kinds of features they should include. This power controlled the book market and limited the choices of these readers even before the book or content in the book was published. While the participants did not reveal exactly who they understood as having this “power,” they did show some awareness about its aim. In this sense, governments or political powers acted as gatekeepers for publishers. This type of control or censorship affected the availability and content of the books on the market.

The second area of powerful gatekeeping can be seen in the prioritisation of certain types of books, especially bestsellers. Marketing tools such as advertisements on television and the internet as well as book displays in bookstores affected the choices of these young readers. On one hand, some of these participants criticised this control and prioritising of certain books. Their emphasis on the idea that these books had certain characteristics such as similar endings and similar content or that their authors belonged to a particular ideological group shows how they were aware of the political issues behind publishing and advertising phenomena.

This issue has become an even more contentious topic in Turkey after the 2016 coup attempt, so it would be interesting to see how the discussions would develop if the study were to be repeated in 2017. On the other hand, the participants might not want to reveal their thoughts about these issues because of the fear that currently dominates the country. It might also bring interesting results to have these discussions led by peers rather than an adult, and to hold them outside the school.

Thus, one conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that even if there were many book choices available for the readers, their choices were, in fact, limited by a number of factors. The first and perhaps most dominant factor was

power authorities, including political and publishing authorities, that made choices on behalf of these young readers by eliminating the books or content that they did not want to present to readers and by “presenting [those books that they want to make popular] in a way that you want to buy it” (Radley).

8.1.3 Reading Choices and Attitudes Depended on How the Gatekeepers and Facilitators in the Social Community Suggested Books.

These readers in this study belonged to a social community that was divided into inside of school and outside of school. This community includes teachers and schoolmates inside school, and outside, there are family, friends, and librarians who shaped their readership. Suggestions, encouragement, or compulsion sometimes affect their choices. Notably, these readers were aware of these factors and they were taking their own positions by criticising them. Some readers rebelled against “compulsion” and against the people who compelled them to read certain books by not reading them. Chapter 6 shows that these readers did not really accept what was offered to them by gatekeepers, but rather they sometimes “resisted” (Sipe and McGuire, 2006) or subverted adult authorities by “not reading those books they suggested” or by “taking a break from reading books” altogether because of not being allowed to read the books that they liked or not being strong enough to stand against adults and “read whatever [they] wanted to read.” This suggests that these readers wanted to be actively involved in their choices and have the freedom to make their own decisions about what to read. This is a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of reading in Turkey, because it is the first study that has provided young readers with the opportunity to raise this issue during reading activities. This also offers a strategy for schools to contribute to students’ enthusiasm for reading by opening more doors for them to make their own choices for both their in-school and outside of school reading practices. This result has also had a professional impact on me as both teacher and researcher as I reviewed my attitudes towards my students while suggesting books.

8.1.4 The High Price of Books and the Low Socio-Economic Conditions of the Readers Reduced the Opportunity to Access Books.

Affordability also had an effect as some participants pointed to the high price of books, which prevented their access to these books. As “sales” were a crucial aspect of bestsellers, their prices were higher than other books. Difficulty of

access was not an issue just applied to bestsellers; according to the observations of some participants (presented in Chapter 5), poverty prevented some children from accessing books in general. In villages in particular, there were not many opportunities for children because, in addition to their lack of financial support, the lack of libraries and school libraries seems to be an obstacle for them. For this reason, providing more access options by reducing book prices (which does not seem possible as long as “sales” are prioritised over reading) and by providing young people with more opportunities for free access to books would be helpful for those young people. This could be done -among other things- through enriching public libraries and school libraries, providing mobile libraries (as exemplified by a child who turned his mother’s barn and tractor into a library and mobile library [Emül, 2016]), and launching free book clubs.

8.2 Given there are adolescents who do not like reading books, why do others still like reading and how do they practise this?

8.2.1 Those Who Liked Reading Usually Had Good Role Models or They Received Encouragement from the People around Them When They Were Younger.

Some readers stressed the importance of a good role model such as a grandparent, parent, or teacher in their love for reading while others mentioned how these adults motivated them, even though the adults themselves did not read books. However, the absence of good role models and/or the presence of *discouragement* rather than encouragement led to a negative attitude towards reading books and may have made the young people reluctant readers as a consequence. The 90% of those who perceived themselves as someone who had no enthusiasm for reading did/could not put a book title as a favourite book. However, some of them still wanted to participate in the reading discussions. This suggests that there was still a chance that these reluctant readers could start reading books if they were provided with a welcoming reading environment and had received encouragement.

8.2.2 Popular Books Increased the Discussions around Books and Reading.

Although the participants criticised books that were made popular by the mass media (as discussed earlier in this chapter), it appeared that one of the reasons for these participants still having enthusiasm for reading was the influence of the media, including mainstream and social media, which helped books remain

important for them. For example, bestselling books were read and sold in Turkey and in other parts of the world with the influence of their “ranks” (Carrare, 2012, p. 717) (although there is criticism from both the students and researchers due to the inaccuracy of the sale figures), and they were often adapted into movies. In other words, reading books became a part of popular consumer culture.

8.2.3 Female Participants Took a More Aesthetic Stance than Males.

In terms of gender differences, female readers pointed to the quality of writing as an important factor in a bestseller’s popularity while male participants focused mainly on the aspect of the “power” behind these books, even though they also read these books (except Kdr and Panther). Their responses to books, both verbal and in their drawings, suggest that aesthetic elements were more emphasised by the female participants, as presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Based on the language analysis from these chapters, the evidence suggests that while the female readers in the study used both emotional and cognitive elements in their responses to the fictional books they read, the emotional elements dominated. The responses of the male participants, on the other hand, included more cognitive than emotional elements. However, participants from both genders offered critical responses to texts. These kinds of responses have been suggested by literary scholars as an additional stance to Rosenblatt’s two stances (Cai, 2008; Lewis, 2000)

Female dominance was also visible in a new reading platform, namely, online reading, especially Wattpad (see Chapter 7), which was not only a result of the data collected from the Secondary 2 students in the city of Adana but also of the investigation of the two stories from the Wattpad Turkey page. I acknowledge the possibility that an investigation of different two stories from different genres (such as science fiction or adventure) may have led to a different conclusion, given that the two stories examined here were both romance stories, which were found to be more preferred by female readers (Radway, 1984). This is a limitation of the current study but the implications are very interesting in terms of future research and offer a possible direction for that research.

It is important to remember that curriculum and school practices emphasised efferent reading over aesthetic or critical reading. This suggests that there was

an influence from school practices and education and curriculum policies on the participants' aims and reading practices. As Mark A. Pike (2003) argues, "all the benefits of 'efferent' reading where information is retained after the event, are derived from aesthetic reading" (p. 65), suggesting that there is a need in the Turkish curriculum to emphasise these two aspects of reading in order to increase the young generation's enthusiasm for reading, their engagement with books, and in turn, to maximise the benefits of reading for them.

8.3 Does Reading Fiction Print and/or Online Really Affect Adolescent Readers? If So, What Kinds of Effects Does It Have on the Reader?

8.3.1 Fiction Had both Short-term and Long-term Effects on the Participants.

Some reading research acknowledges that reading fiction really does affect readers (Appel and Richter, 2007; Oatley, 1999a); however, the question is how and in what way. Although the research investigates this matter and indicated variety of ways in which fiction affects the reader (see Chapter 2), these studies mainly showed the short-term effects of reading fiction. However, investigating the long-term effects of reading fiction is a very challenging matter because of the involvement of many factors that affect a person's life. It is perhaps for this reason that there are no studies that investigate the long-term effects, at least as far as my review of the literature reveals. In this study, I tried to overcome this difficulty by opening doors for the participants to travel to their inner worlds in light of the books they read during the study period and through the reading activities they did together with their peers.

One particular reading activity, 3 Words, which takes as its inspiration from studies that use "rivers of reading" (i.e., Arizpe et al., 2014; Cliff Hodges, 2010,) as a response strategy, enables readers to explore their development of reading from childhood; this activity assisted me in understanding the long-term effects of reading. Fiction, as indicated in Chapter 6, functioned as a lighthouse, helping readers to illuminate their past and current experiences and to prepare themselves for the future. As the literature cited in Chapter 2 suggests, some incidents remain in the memory of people because those incidents have an effect on the people who experience them. As an indicator of the effects of their previous reading, the participants "just pick[ed] a quote" or a scene "from one of the books [they] read" (Panther), and they used them in reading

discussions, relating the quotes to the current story or discussion topic. Participants sometimes used them as supporting evidence in their arguments. Even though there was no other evidence, this way was sufficient evidence to say, with some confidence, that yes, fiction really affects young readers. This could be included in the category of long-term effects, given that the readers recalled quotes from their previous reading, including from their childhood reading.

8.3.2 Reading Fiction and Discussing It With Peers Contributes to Participants' Development of Empathy and Theory of Mind Skills.

The effects, as Chapter 6 illustrates, were not one-way effects, and the readers created a different meaning, bringing their perspectives to the text. Although they sometimes agreed about what kinds of messages were involved in the texts they discussed, each participant approached the matter from a different perspective, which expanded the views of others. In other words, by participating in reading discussions, each participant had the chance to read the discussed book through the eyes of the other participants. This broader viewpoint enabled them to discover how others think and feel upon reading those books, which develops their ToM and empathy skills.

Cantor (2006) argues that when people like a protagonist, they tend to empathise with him or her. Some crime fiction readers who participated in this study, particularly *Tess* and *Snowbird*, indicated how crime had become ethical in their minds. Their positive emotional reaction to an extremely violent incident such as eating an organ of a dead person leaves critical questions to be answered: How will reading and watching those scenes really affect these students' future actions? For example, would they put emotional or physical support behind the killing of someone if there were a "right reason," in their judgement? If watching frightening movies sometimes causes "irrational" behaviour in the audience "for long periods of time" (Cantor, 2006, p.326), then a limit in the amount of the portrayal of violence and the characteristics of hero archetypes in fictional texts or movies should also be considered. This matter needs attention and further empirical research, given the other theoretical research presented in Chapter 2 that suggests some fictional texts may present violence in a way that might cause novice readers to struggle with judging the immorality of violence, and that they may see it as an acceptable action.

More evidence from the reading discussions presented in Chapters 5 and 6 suggests that the readers' understanding of self and others has developed through reading books that present vulnerable groups (i.e., *Heroin*, *Fault*, *Ship*, *The Curious Incident*, and *Hunger*) and by discussing the issues after reading the texts with their peers. For example, the *Heroin* discussion enabled them to empathise with the book characters that are addicted to illegal drugs. By doing this, arguably, they developed their awareness of this social issue in Turkey and thought about some possible ways of resolving this issue (see Chapter 6). The participants' responses to *Truth* also suggest that reading book extracts increased readers' awareness of this social problem and provided them with an opportunity to review their approach to people who experienced similar problems in their country. Coming back to my starting point (the question of how books can promote tolerance between different ethnic and cultural groups) this thesis, I believe, makes a contribution to the field by exploring how adolescent readers' awareness can increase through reading and discussing fictional texts that present vulnerable groups.

8.3.3 The Drawing Activity as a Response to Previous Readings Helped Participants Dig into Their Memories and Showed Residues of Fiction in Their Minds and Hearts.

Drawing an imaginary book cover for a book that the participants liked reading when they were children opened for them a different way to explore their childhoods by looking back at their memories of reading (see Chapter 6). Some participants drew a book cover for a book that they had read when they were around 10 years old. Although they had read the books a long time previously, they were able to capture the emotional scenes from the books.

8.3.4 Reflections on the Research Process and Suggestions for Further Research

Readers of these lines have had the chance to read about this whole process from my point of view as the narrator. While doing this, I have tried to not to impose upon readers my view of the issues because I became aware, as a candidate reader response scholar, that there is no absolute conclusion that can be drawn from the participants' responses. As Rosenblatt (1988) rightly points out, the reader makes a "selection," (p. 12) and as a reader of the responses, this is what I did while reading and interpreting the readers' responses to the

texts. The selections I made and the meaning I have given to them is the first and maybe foremost limitation of this study.

As for directions for further research, this study has shown the potential of working with adolescent responses to fiction in order to understand the effects of fiction and their choices of fiction, and therefore, there is room for further research in all these areas. In particular, it would be useful to compare students' interest in reading in both primary and secondary schools in Turkey with the texts that schools offer in order to identify the gaps in this area and to develop a more supportive curriculum for the promotion of reading. Another suggestion is to carry out a longitudinal case study using the tools of reader response theory and fiction books that promote tolerance and understanding, chosen by participants. Carrying out this kind of study (particularly in Eastern Turkey where the Kurdish issue is more prominent and in the regions where Syrian refugees have moved to) could more clearly show how books can contribute to peace in Turkey.

8.3.5 Implications for Promoting Reading and Critical Response in Turkey

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 showed, readers were actively involved in the reading activities, and they were not passive receivers of what the literary texts offered them. The readers actually became critical of what they were offered and wanted their choices to be recognised and respected by adults. However, the curriculum and school system in Turkey seem to perceive students as passive receivers of the message imposed by the text and focusing on efferent reading but not stressing the need for aesthetic reading. Additionally, the current education and assessment system pressures students to memorise but not to criticise, so students' development of critical thinking skills is questionable. Thus, in order to contribute to reading habits and skills, the Ministry of Education in Turkey should place more emphasis on students' needs and interests when preparing the curriculum and school policies.

Another issue that is not addressed in the curriculum and school practices is adolescents' interest and engagement in online reading communities²⁵ such as

²⁵ While making the final edits for this thesis, a new curriculum was introduced by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey where online practices took place for the first time in literary Curriculum, but with the emphasis on the 'digital competence' without mentioning online reading practices (Ministry of National Education in Turkey, 2017, p.11).

Wattpad. An analysis of two stories from Wattpad Turkey revealed that young readers actively engage in reading, writing, reviewing, and sharing on this platform. However, the literature suggests that there have been few studies in Turkey that touch on this well-known site. Therefore, another contribution of this thesis is that young people's engagement with Wattpad and online fiction has been investigated for the first time. The study has shown that there is currently an excellent opportunity for literary scholars, children's and young adult literature researchers and teachers to investigate and research this burgeoning area of digital reading platforms. There is also a need to consider how schools can benefit from these kinds of platforms to make the young generation more engaged with books and with reading and writing because there appears to be a definite gap between the texts offered in schools and the texts preferred by young readers to read inside and outside of school. It is necessary to address this difference, and the reasons and consequences of this, so that the curriculum can be proactive and responsive to the needs and interests of students.

Although literary scholars have used different types of texts (i.e., metafiction picture books and wordless picture books) or different terminologies (i.e., reading circles, reading groups), they recognise the benefits of reading discussions (Arizpe et al., 2014; Farrar, 2017). Although my aim was not to create a pedagogic strategy, reading activities, in addition to being a useful data collection method, also work well in opening a space to discuss serious issues and understand and respect others' thoughts. Therefore, schools and libraries can benefit from this strategy to create a safe space to express thoughts with a mixed group of reluctant and avid readers. I also used this strategy for the first time for this research and in this way, I realised its potential in literary and educational research.

Finally, I would argue that problems relating to prejudice, intolerance, and hatred between different cultural and ethnic groups in Turkey could be eased by organising reading activities with carefully selected books; these books must meet the students' needs and expectations and not present matters such as discrimination, prejudice, and crime as "acceptable" actions or try to impose these kinds of behaviours. Instead, the books must "release" readers to think, flourish, explore, and critique. Reading and discussing these kinds of books in an

environment where participants will be and feel safe and comfortable could develop their empathy, understanding, and ToM skills. As a result of this development, more respectful and tolerable citizens should emerge.

Leonardo: Yeah! This last part of the book should be read in our school!

Osman: Why should it be read in the school?

Leonardo: Because there are many prejudiced people; it is not possible to explain this.

Osman: Do you think it can tear down prejudice?

MagicBookmark: Yes! By engaging in dialogue, prejudice can be broken!

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Questions:

1. Let's start with talking about fiction.
 - a. Could you tell me what you think about reading fiction?
 - b. Why do you read reading fiction? Do you have any particular aim in mind?
 - c. How would you compare reading fiction and watching movies?
2. Could you tell me how you choose books to read?
 - a. Do you think you make the right reading choices?
 - b. Have you ever said it is waste of time to read this book for a particular book, if so why?
 - c. Could you tell me what is your favourite book? What do you like about this book?
 - d. Can you recall any particular book, chapter or a sentence that influenced your thoughts? Any other one?
 - e. What about a memorable reading time for you? When you imagine yourself reading what comes to your mind about your special moments of reading?
3. In relation to this let's move on your emotions when you read fiction.
 - a. Could you tell me how you feel while you are reading fiction? Could you explain this through different scenarios?
 - b. Do you think these emotions you mentioned differ from the ones you feel when you experience something in real life?
 - c. Do you ever dream about the stories or characters after reading?
 - d. Have you ever really loved a fictional character? Did you want to behave like that character?
 - e. Have you ever said 'No this story should end like that!' after reading a story?
4. Now could you think of the role of other external factors in your reading choices?
 - a. What kinds of things affect your reading choices?
 - b. Is there anyone who has been shaping your reading habits and choices?
 - c. What do you think about the roles of publishers in the availability of fictions?
 - d. What do you think about popular fiction bestsellers?? What do you think makes them popular?
5. Do you think there are some books that are published particularly for your age group? If so, what kind of books they are?
 - a. Do you think there are enough books for your age group?
 - b. What types of books do you prefer to read? Why?

- c. What do you think about advertisement of books? Do you think some books are put forward more than others?
 - e. Do you think the place where you read is significant? Where do you mostly read books?
6. Could you tell me your opinions about e-books?
- a. Do you read e-books a lot? Why/why not?
 - b. What do you think about the future of printed texts?

Thank you very much for your responses and valuable your time.

Appendix 2 Online Questionnaire Questions



Dear Students,

This survey has been designed to identify your reading choices and the effects of these choices. Your response is important in terms of studies on reading in Turkey and in other countries.

Your answers are private and no one will see them from your school or anywhere else except me. Please note that this is not an examination; there are no right or wrong answers. Feel free to write anything you want in relation to the questions.

I would like to thank you for your honesty, patience, and giving your valuable time. I wish you high achievements in your studies!

Osman Coban

PhD Student

University of Glasgow

School of Education

Your nickname (Please write a nickname you want to use):

1. Please choose your gender

A) Male

B) Female

2. Please write a nickname for yourself.

.....

3. Please choose your school.

A)

B)

C)

D)

E)

F)

G)

H)

I)

J)

- K)
- L)
- M)
- N)
- O)
- P)

4. How many information books (such as historical, scientific, and religious books) do you read in one year?
 - A) 0–5
 - B) 6–10
 - C) 11–15
 - D) 16–20
 - E) More than 20
5. How many fiction books (such as novels and stories) do you read in one year?
 - A) 0–5
 - B) 6–10
 - C) 11–15
 - D) 16–20
 - E) More than 20
6. Do you have a favourite book (a book that is special to you)?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No
7. Can you write the name of your favourite book?

8. Why do you think you like this book?

9. Please choose to what extent the factors below affect your reading choices?

Not effective	Undecided	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective
---------------	-----------	--------------------	-----------	----------------

 - Personal decision
 - My friends
 - My family and relatives
 - My teachers
 - Film and TV series adaptations of the books
 - Advertisements
 - Book prices
 - Book covers
10. Write a name of a piece of fiction and its author that you read when you were between 7–15 years old. Then write a scene from that piece of fiction that affected you most.

Finally, write how this scene affected you.

.....

- 11.** Please tick the appropriate box about what you think about the books you have read so far in your life.

None A Few Majority All

They were boring.

They were fun.

They were relaxing.

They were informative.

They were waste of time.

They increased my desire to read.

They affected my thoughts and feelings.

I felt their impression for a long time.

They affected my character.

They changed my view of life.

They had a negative effect on me.

- 12.** Which of the following roles are the most important three roles of fiction in your view?

(Please tick three choices)

It enhances knowledge.

It gives pleasure.

It develops language.

It helps to understand others and ourselves.

We find something about ourselves.

It reduces stress.

It is a way to escape life.

It helps to make changes in our lives.

It allows us to have fun.

- 13.** Is there any book that you want to read?

Yes

No

- 14.** What is the name of the book you want to read?

.....

- 15.** Why do you want to read this book?

My friend suggested it.

I heard about it from social media.

My teacher suggested it.

I am reading the whole series.

Because of its movie adaptation.

Other (Please explain)

- 16.** Sade is slipping her English book into her schoolbag when Mama screams. Two sharp cracks splinter the air. She hears her father's fierce cry, rising, falling. "No! No!" The revving of a car and skidding of tyres smother his voice. Her bag topples from the bed, spilling books, pen and pencil onto the floor. She races to the veranda, pushing past Femi in the doorway. His body is wooden with fright. "Mama mi?" she whispers. Papa is kneeling in the driveway, Mama partly curled up against him. One bare leg stretches out in front of her. His strong hands grip her, trying to halt the growing scarlet monster. But it has already spread down her bright white nurse's uniform. It stains the earth around them. A few seconds, that is all. Later, it will always seem much longer. *(The Other Side of Truth, Beverley Naidoo, 2000, p.1)*

The extract above was taken from a book about two children who need to abandon their home after their mother's murder. They escape to London using fake passports with a woman stranger because their father cannot go with them. Their father asks them to find their uncle who lives there. However, when they arrive in London, the woman leaves them alone and they cannot find their uncle.

Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly you agree/disagree with the statements below.

1	2	3	4	5
(strongly disagree)			(strongly agree)	

The mother's death affected me.

The children's situation upset me.

I wanted to help people who are in a similar situation.

I wanted to read the book.

I enjoyed reading this extract.

These kinds of stories affect me.

I would like to do something for them.

I prefer fantasy fiction instead of this kind of realistic fiction.

- 17.** The extract below is from *The Other Side of Truth* as well. This extract presents Sade and Aunty Buki's conversation before Sade and Femi escape to London:

Whatever she took had to be small. What would happen to her desk? After her last school report, Papa had asked a carpenter to make it for her specially. (...) "What about this, Sade?" Mama Buki held up the aso-oke that Sade had worn to the last family wedding. Mama had made splendid new clothes for all four of them from the same deep-blue material woven with

golden thread. Sade felt her eyes pricking again.

“I don’t know, Auntie,” she said quickly.

“Let me roll them up small anyway. You need one good outfit, wherever you are.”

How could he ever wear it again? thought Sade. The last time they had all been so happy.

Mama had sat up late every night for a month sewing the wedding clothes.

Sade remembered saying that the blue shone like the sea at Lekki Beach at sunrise and

Femi had joked that Mama was sewing up the sea. At least the outfit would help her keep that memory.

(The Other Side of Truth, Beverley Naidoo, 2000, p.15)

Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly you agree/disagree with the statements below.

1	2	3	4	5
(strongly disagree)			(strongly agree)	

The children’s situation affected me.

Sade’s situation upset me.

I thought about the value of the things that I own.

I imagined myself in Sade’s situation.

I have met children who are similar to Sade and Femi.

My view about people in real life has changed.

My view about immigrant people has changed.

Reading this kind of book helps us to understand immigrant people.

I imagined myself as one of the characters in the book.

18. Please tick as appropriate about the time you spend on each activity below.

TV Computer Mobile Phone Reading Studying Working (at home or somewhere else)

I usually don’t spend time on this.

Less than one hour.

Between 1 and 2 hours.

Between 3 and 4 hours.

Between 4 and 5 hours.

More than 5 hours.

19. Do you read e-books (such as books on tablets, smartphones, or the Internet)?

Yes

No

20. Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly you agree/disagree with the statements about e-books below.

I prefer reading e-books as they are cheaper and easier to access.

Reading e-books is more fun than reading printed books.

I prefer some e-books because no one knows what I am reading.

I think that e-books' language and style is better than printed books.

21. Can you write down the name of an e-book you read and its author's name if you can remember?

.....

22. Choose one of the numbers from 1 to 5 to show how much you liked the book. 1 means "I did not like it," and 5 means "I liked it very much."

1 2 3 4 5

23. Please choose how much enthusiasm you have for reading books.

- A) Very much.
- B) I don't have any enthusiasm for reading.
- C) I have got an average enthusiasm for reading.
- D) I have got a little enthusiasm for reading.

24. (For those chose B or D) Why do you think you don't have any enthusiasm or little enthusiasm for reading books? Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly agree/disagree with the statements about your reading attitude.

1 2 3 4 5

Because of being employed outside school, I don't have time for reading.

My parents did not encourage me.

Because of a lack of good role models.

I was forced to read books that I didn't like.

I read books unsuitable for my level.

I think reading does not add anything to our lives.

I don't like reading.

I was prevented from reading.

I prefer studying to reading.

(For those chose C) Why do you think you have an average enthusiasm for reading books? Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly you agree/disagree with the statements about your reading attitude.

1 2 3 4 5

Because of being employed outside school, I don't have much time for reading.

My parents and relatives encouraged me.

I had good role models.

I read books suitable for my level.

I love reading.

I had no obstacles.

I read enough.

I prefer studying to reading.

(For those chose A) Why do you think you have a lot of enthusiasm for reading books? Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly you agree/disagree with the statements about your reading attitude.

1 2 3 4 5

My parents read a lot.

My parents and relatives encouraged me.

My parents got me into the habit of reading in my childhood.

I had good role models.

I met the right books.

Books are a way to escape life.

Books are relaxing to me.

I love reading.

I read as it enhances knowledge.

25. Please choose numbers between 1 and 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) to show how strongly you agree/disagree with the statements about reading.

1 2 3 4 5

The literary language of popular books is high.

Advertisements and publishers affect books' popularity.

Popular books are more fun than other books.

Popular books are read for fun.

Popular books attract my attention more than other books do.

26. Would you like to do a reading activity with a group of your peers?

Yes

No

A BIG THANK YOU for your time and honesty. If you have any questions or concerns related with the questionnaire or the research, please contact the researcher Osman Coban at:

o.coban.1@research.gla.ac.uk

or his principal supervisor Dr. Evelyn Arizpe at:

Email: Evelyn.Arizpe@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 3 Plain Language Statement for Parents

Plain Language Statement for Parents

1. Study Title and Researcher Details

The title of this study is ‘A Cognitive Approach to Adolescent Reading Choices: Emotional and Experiential Effects of Reading Fiction on Turkish Readers’.

Researcher: Osman Coban

UK Address: School of Education, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow.

Turkey Address: Levent Mah. 1724 Sk. No:15 Yuregir/Adana

Tel: 00447749768009, 00905435077054

Email: o.coban.1@research.gla.ac.uk, cobanosman@hotmail.com

2. Invitation paragraph

Dear parents,

I would like to invite your child to take part in a research project. The details of the study have been explained in this paper. It is important for you to understand the details and purposes of the study. Please read the following information carefully before deciding to take part in it. You can ask questions if you find anything that is unclear. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

In this study, it is intended to investigate the reading choices of young readers and effects of these choices

4. Why has my child been chosen?

I will be working with young people aged 15-17. As a young reader, he/she knows his/her own reading practices, so he/she can make an important contribution to his/her own and peers’ reading practices through uncovering possible effects of his/her reading practices.

5. Do I have to take part?

Your child does not have to take part in this study which is entirely voluntary. Even if you decide they can participate in this study now, you can withdraw your child’s participation at any stage without giving any reason.

6. What will happen to my child if he/she takes part?

Firstly, he/she will be interviewed about their reading choices. Then, along with other students he/she will be invited to participate in 6-10 reading sessions. There will be 1-2 sessions in a week and each session will be 45 minutes during the normal course of schoolwork. He/she will also be asked to read some book chapters at home, to fill a form while and after reading the book. At the end of study, there will be a 20 minute interview to gather his/her feedback on this reading experience.

7. Will his/her taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your child's participation in this study will be kept confidential and his/her name will be changed.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be submitted to University of Glasgow as a PhD thesis. A written summary of the results or a copy of the final report can be provided to you if requested.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by Osman Coban, PhD student at the University of Glasgow.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by my supervisors Dr. Evelyn Arizpe and Dr. Maureen Farrell, Turkish Ministry of Education and the University of Glasgow, School of Education, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

10. Contact for Further Information

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the study please contact me:

Osman Coban

Tel: 00447749768009

00905435077054

Email: o.coban.1@research.gla.ac.uk

You can also contact my supervisor if you would like to discuss any aspects of the study:

Dr. Evelyn Arizpe

Email: Evelyn.Arizpe@glasgow.ac.uk

Phone : 0044 1413301920

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer–Dr. Muir Houston:

muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk Telephone: 0044 141-330-4699

Appendix 4 Plain Language Statement for Students

1. Study Title and Researcher Details

The title of this study is ‘A Cognitive Approach to Adolescent Reading Choices: Emotional and Experiential Effects of Reading Fiction on Turkish Readers’.

Researcher: Osman Coban

UK Address: School of Education, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow.

Turkey Address: Levent Mah. 1724 Sk. No:15 Yuregir/Adana

Tel: 00447749768009, 00905435077054

Email: o.coban.1@research.gla.ac.uk

2. Invitation paragraph

Dear students,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The details of the study have been explained in this paper. It is important for you to understand the details and purposes of the study. Please read the following information carefully before deciding to take part in it. You can ask questions if you find anything that is unclear. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

In this study, it is intended to investigate the reading choices of young readers like yourself and how these choices affect you and your peers.

4. Why have I been chosen?

I am interested in the reading practices of people your ages. As a young reader, you know your own reading practices, so you can make an important contribution to my research through uncovering possible effects of your reading practices.

5. Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study which is entirely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate in this study, you can withdraw your participation at any stage without giving any reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

Firstly, you will be interviewed about your reading choices. Then, along with other students you will be invited to participate in 6-10 reading sessions. There will be 1-2 sessions in a week and

each session will be 45 minutes during the normal course of schoolwork. You will also be asked to read some book chapters at home, to fill a form while and after reading the book. At the end of study, there will be a 20 minute interview to gather your feedback on this reading experience.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential and your name will be changed.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be submitted to University of Glasgow as a PhD thesis. A written summary of the results or a copy of the final report can be provided to you if requested.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by Osman Coban, PhD student at the University of Glasgow.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by my supervisors Dr. Evelyn Arizpe and Dr. Maureen Farrell, Turkish Ministry of Education and the University of Glasgow, School of Education, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

10. Contact for Further Information

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the study please contact me:

Osman Coban

Phone: 00447749768009

00905435077054

Email: o.coban.1@research.gla.ac.uk

You can also contact my supervisor if you would like to discuss any aspects of the study:

Dr. Evelyn Arizpe

Email: Evelyn.Arizpe@glasgow.ac.uk

Phone : 0044 1413301920

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer–Dr. Muir Houston:

muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk Telephone: 00 44 141-330-4699

Appendix 5 Consent Form for Parents



Title of Project: A Cognitive Approach to Adolescent Reading Choices: Emotional and Experiential Effects of Reading Fiction on Turkish Readers

Name of Researcher: Osman Coban

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my child at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to the sessions being audio-taped.
4. I consent to the researcher taking a copy of my child's any work which will be done for the study.
5. I understand that I will be referred to by pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.
6. I agree / do not agree (circle as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant _____

Name of Parent _____

_____ Date _____

_____ Signature _____

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 6 Consent Form for Participants

Title of Project: A Cognitive Approach to Adolescent Reading Choices: Emotional and Experiential Effects of Reading Fiction on Turkish Readers

Name of Researcher: Osman Coban

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my child at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to the sessions being audio-taped.
4. I consent to the researcher taking a copy of my child's any work which will be done for the study.
5. I understand that I will be referred to by pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.
7. I agree / do not agree (circle as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant _____	_____ Date _____	_____ Signature _____
Researcher _____	_____ Date _____	_____ Signature _____

Appendix 7 Focus Group Questions:

In the focus group study, students will be asked questions related to their reading activities and the possible effects of the book on them. Some examples of the possible questions are below:

1. Why did you choose this book rather than that one?
2. Do you think why the author wrote this book?
3. If you were the author, how would you end the book?
4. How did you feel about your reading experience?
5. What else would you like to say about the story?
6. How did you feel while reading the story?
7. How do you think the book affected your friends?

Please note these are guidance questions. Student may be asked different questions depending on the book they choose to read. The books will be chosen among the “100 Basic Works” of Turkish Educational Ministry, Turkish and World Classics, Contemporary Turkish and International Best-Seller Young Adult and Children’s books. The list includes various narrative genres including picture books, graphic novels, historical fiction, romance, science fiction, thriller, fantasy, biography and horror.

The selected books will be in accordance with the Constitution, fundamental law of the Turkish National Education and the general objective of the National Education.

Appendix 8 Participants:

School 1	School 2
BookMonster (girl)	Isfendiyar (boy)
Leonardo (boy)	Snowbird (girl)
Kdr (boy)	Radley (girl)
BoiceLove (girl)	Panther (boy)
MagicBookmark (girl)	Tess (girl)